

GAUDĪYA BHAKTI
DARŚANA
ISSUE 2

Śrī Kātyāyanī Vrata

Our Gauḍīya Guru-varga
Explains the Tattva
on Śrī Kātyāyanī-vrata

The Gopīs Who Observed
The Vow To Worship Kātyāyanī

The Nitya-siddha
and Sādhana-siddha Gopīs

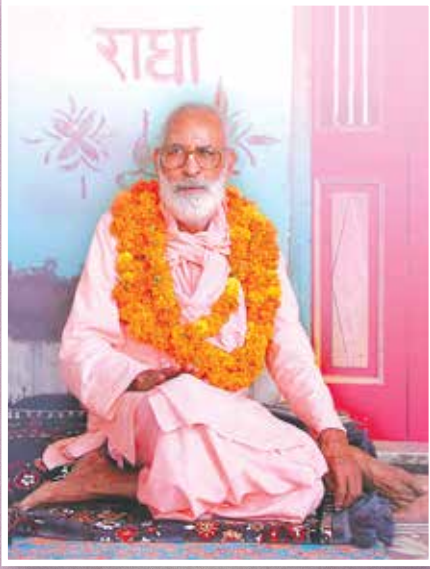
The Glories of Yogamāyā

Questions and Answers
on Kātyāyanī-vrata



GAUḌĪYA BHAKTI DARŚANA

manifested by the
causeless mercy of
paramārādhyaṭama
om-viṣṇupāda
rūpānuga-ācārya-varya



ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA
NĀRĀYAṆA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA
BHAKTABANDHĀVA ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA

Best amongst the 11th generation of
descendants in the Bhāgavata-paramparā
from Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya Mahāprabhu,
and foremost bestower of
vraja-bhakti in the modern age.

As one offers Gaṅgā water to the
Gaṅgā, we dedicate and offer
this magazine to Śrīla Gurudeva.

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KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE

हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे।
हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे॥

Śāstra teaches many things, but it does not openly teach about Kātyāyanī-vrata. This vrata is hidden. It is not meant for everyone. Following it is only possible for someone who, inspired by Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, has a strong desire to do so.

Kātyāyanī-vrata is not for *karmīs*, *jñānis*, and *yogīs*. It is specifically meant for those who wish to serve Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī under the guidance of the Vraja-devīs. It is not for those in *śānta*-, *dāśya*-, *sakhya*-, or *vātsalya-rasa*, but only for those who aspire to serve Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in *mādhurya-rasa*.

By truly following this vrata, you will become naked—naked of material desires, possessions, and everything you previously valued. Following this vrata will make you a *sannyāsī*. If you do not fear renouncing everything, becoming a destitute beggar in rags, going door to door, having no more helpers, friends, or relatives, then you can try to follow this vrata. But if you want sense gratification, like the opulence of Dvārakā, health, wealth, name and fame, followers, disciples, temples, and so on, then there is no need for you to follow this vrata. This vrata has a completely different goal. It is against this material world, against the material body, mind, and senses.

For those who are determined to follow this vrata despite all forewarnings, and who want to learn about the transcendental result of following this vrata, for them we will discuss the origin of this vrata and its benefits.

At the end of Dvāpara-yuga, five thousand years ago, Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Parīkṣit Mahārāja. Parīkṣit Mahārāja heard how, in Tretā-yuga, Lord Rāmacandra went to the Daṇḍakāraṇya forest and met with the sages there. The sages prayed to Lord Rāma for a loving relationship with Him. They had been chanting the *gopāla-mantra* for a long time. Rāmacandra said, “In this present incarnation I cannot accept you as you desire, but when I next appear as Kṛṣṇa, in Dvāpara-yuga, you will take birth in Vraja in the families of *gopas*. At that time, I will accept you as My beloveds.”

As the Lord declared, so it came to be. The sages achieved *svarūpa-siddhi* and took birth in Vraja from the wombs of *gopīs*. This is described by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in *Gopāla-campū*. Early in the morning, at the age of three, these *sādhana-siddha gopīs* were collecting flowers and peacock feathers near the bank of the Yamunā. They had natural love for Kṛṣṇa and thus collected all kinds of things that give Kṛṣṇa happiness.

EDITORIAL

Śrī Kātyāyanī-vrata: Forewarning

As the young *gopīs* were doing this, a beautiful flute sound entered their ears and made their hearts restless. They sat and closed their eyes and only drank this nectar, losing taste for everything else. After a long time, their external sense returned, but their bodies had no more strength—they felt empty and lost. When they returned home, their parents were concerned for them, seeing that they did not eat anything and appeared morose. The *gopīs* would not respond to the inquiries of their parents and only remained in a corner of their rooms weeping. When other *gopīs* came to visit, they did not speak to each other, but only sat and cried together without expressing the pain that had overwhelmed their hearts.

The next morning at three, these *gopīs* went in groups to the bank of the Yamunā. As they walked, they sang together and this uplifted their hearts somewhat. Arriving at the Yamunā, they prayed there, bathed, and sang of the beauty and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. For some days the *gopīs* continued this practice. Gradually, their longing for Kṛṣṇa increased until it was unbearable.

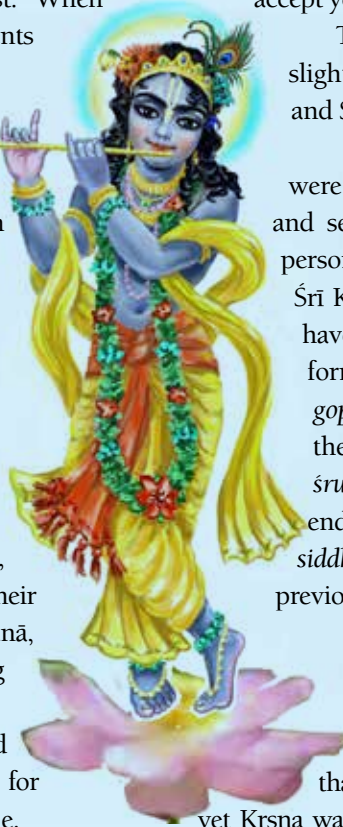
On the first day of the *hemanta* season, Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī arrived at the Yamunā and came amidst the *sādhana-siddha gopīs*. She told them, “Dear *gopīs*, I understand the pain in your heart. I know why you are suffering. You heard the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and drank its nectar. Now you cannot bear being apart from Him. Although you are quite young, your desire has matured. I understand everything. Today I will give you a *mantra* to follow as a *vrata* for this month. By doing

so, all your desires will be fulfilled. Every morning, continue to come here to the Yamunā. Make a deity of Devī out of sand and worship her with *āsana*, *pādyā*, *ācamana*, *arghya*, *bhoga*, *śṛṅgāra*, *ārati*, and *puṣpāñjali*. Then chant this *mantra* intently while meditating on your objective. Devī will directly accept your *pūjā* and fulfill your desire.”

This pastime is explained with slight differences by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Kavi Kaṇapura Gosvāmī.

The sages of Daṇḍakāraṇya were not alone in their desire to meet and serve the Lord of Sweetness. The personified *śāstras* prayed to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be able to serve Him and have a relationship with Him in the forms and with the moods of the *gopīs*. Kṛṣṇa granted their boon and the *śāstras* became *upaniṣad-cārī*- and *śruti-cārī-gopīs* in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* at the end of Dvāpara-yuga. These *sādhana-siddha gopīs* joined the *gopīs* who were previously the *ṛṣis* of Daṇḍakāraṇya.

All these *gopīs* were extremely eager to be accepted by Kṛṣṇa as His dearmost beloved. And they were also afraid. Why? They saw that there were millions of *gopīs* and yet Kṛṣṇa was alone. How could He satisfy the desire of them all? He would accept one, they thought, but could not accept them all. And also they were worried that when they matured, their parents would marry them to boys outside of Vraja. They thought, “We have done so many austerities to have this opportunity to be with Kṛṣṇa, but now, because of our beautiful bodies, everyone will want to enjoy us when we are grown and we will be kept apart from Kṛṣṇa.” Considering their future to be desolate, the *gopīs* wept bitterly.



From the young age of three, the *gopīs*' desire to meet Kṛṣṇa and be solely dedicated to Him increased more and more. They thought, "How can we cross the *māyā* of family attachment? Our parents will not allow us to freely meet with Kṛṣṇa, so how will they become blind to us?"

With these thoughts, the *gopīs* would come to the Yamunā. Knowing their hearts and wishing to fulfill their desire, Kṛṣṇa sent Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī to initiate the *sādhana-siddha gopīs* into the performance of Kātyāyanī-vrata. When she came before the *gopīs*, she taught them this special process and gave them a *mantra* to chant:

*kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patim me kuru te namaḥ**

This *mantra* has three parts. We first pray to Mahāmāyā, the external energy. She is the shadow of the internal energy, or Yogamāyā. Mahāmāyā bewilders everyone. She builds the relationships between the conditioned souls, but she can also cut these same relationships. If Mahāmāyā cuts off the relationship and attachment you have for someone, then all your attraction to that person will be finished. Thus, we pray to Mahāmāyā Kātyāyanī, to free us from our material relationships and attachment—to cut them off and free us to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. She closes the eyes of our material friends and relatives, making them blind to us, so they will not disturb us and let us be. Therefore, we first pray to Mahāmāyā Kātyāyanī.

Next, we pray to Mahā-yoginī, or Yogamāyā Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī. She establishes our relationship with the *nitya-siddha* Vraja-devīs. She

* O Kātyāyanī-devī, O great power of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty controller of everything, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances unto you.

helps us achieve *svarūpa-siddhī* and connects us to the eternal pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

When a new *bhakta* joins the temple, how can he develop good relationships with the advanced devotees? He doesn't know the process. When he first comes to the temple, he is still bound by his mundane nature. He has left his worldly attachments and relationships behind, but still has no idea of how to approach and develop new relationships with the *mahā-bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇavas. It is Paurṇamāsī Yogamāyā who establishes these. We therefore pray to Mahā-yoginī Paurṇamāsī, "Please give us a strong relationship with Śrī Guru, the Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa." Without this connection to the Vaiṣṇavas, you cannot develop your relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates, and without that, it is impossible to enter into *kṛṣṇa-līlā*.

We thus pray to Mahā-yoginī Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī, but who does she herself follow? Who is her *adhiśvarī* (worshipful goddess)?

*makheśvari kriyeśvari svadheśvari sureśvari
tri-veda-bhāratīśvari pramāṇa-śāsaneśvari
rameśvari kṣameśvari pramoda-kānaneśvari
vrajeśvari vrajādhiṣe śrī-rādhike namo 'stu te**
Ūrdhvāmnaya-tantra*

** You are the mistress of all kinds of sacrifices (especially of the topmost *yugalamilana-yajña*); of all actions (since You are the root of all potencies – *mūla-śakti-tattva*); of the *mantras* uttered at *yajñas* and of the sacrificial offerings presented to the demigods; of all the demigods; of the words of the three Vedas; of the enforcement of all scriptural principles; of Śrī Rāmā-devī (the goddess of fortune); of Śrī Kṣamā-devī (the goddess of forgiveness); and especially of the delightful *kuñjas* in Vṛndāvana. When will You mercifully make me Your *dāśī* and grant me the qualification to render service in Your amorous pastimes with the prince of Vraja? O Śrīmatī Rādhikā, owner and maintainer of Vraja! I offer *praṇāma* unto You time and again. (Śrī Rādhā-Kṛpā-Katākṣa-Stava-Rāja, verse 12)



Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the supreme Īśvarī of all *īśvarīs*. The Guru-varga pray to Her with a mood of loving possessiveness (*mamatā*) saying, “Madeśvarī, Prāṇeśvarī. She is not just the Īśvarī of the material and spiritual worlds, She is the Īśvarī of my very life, my *prāṇa*.”

As such, the *adhīśvarī* indicated in the verse - *kātyāyāni mahā-māye* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.4) is also Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Relationship with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī means to accept Her shelter, to always serve Her, and follow in Her footsteps. Adhīśvarī Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī has the power to bestow relationship with Nandagopa-sūta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Only *svarūpa-śakti* can give this opportunity to serve Nanda-sūta. If She asks Him on our behalf, then He will readily accept us as His own. And if Nandagopa-sūta accepts us as His dear associates, then we will have no more problems in life. Therefore Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī gives this *mantra*.

The *īśvarī* of this *mantra* is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, but first Mahāmāyā cleans us, makes a foundation, and cuts our attachment for others, as well as others’ attachment for us. A baby catches anything and puts it in his mouth. If anyone gives it a toy to play with, he thinks, “This is mine.” Everyone has this nature. We desire to collect and possess the things that *māyā* created in this world. If we follow this *vrata* and pray to Mahāmāyā, she will first give us the good intelligence to not touch or take any of her property. She will give us the power to renounce attachment to this world. Once our attachment to this world is broken, then we can develop attachment to the spiritual world and transcendental personalities.

Every morning Śrīla Gurudeva would pray:

rādheśa-keli-prabhutā-vinoda
vinyāsa-vijñāṁ vraja-vanditāṅghrim
kṛpālutādyākhila-viśva-vandyaṁ
*śrī-paurṇamāsīṁ śirasā namāmi****

***I bow my head and offer obeisance unto Śrī Paurṇamāsī-devī, who is completely adept at arranging the most elevated varieties of enjoyment for the master of Śrīmatī Rādhikā; whose lotus feet are worshiped by the Vrajavāsīs; and who, due to possessing the entirety of transcendental qualities starting with kindness, is worshipable to everyone in the entire universe.

The Vrajavāsīs arrange everything for Kṛṣṇa's happiness. They pray to Yogamāyā, "O Bhagavatī, please give us *adhikāra* (qualification) for *kṛṣṇa-sevā*." We should pray to Paurṇamāsī-devī to remove all our desire and taste for mundane enjoyment and relationships, and to awaken spiritual greed within us. Śiva Ṭhākura himself came and took shelter of Paurṇamāsī-devī to gain entrance into Vraja.

Therefore Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sang:

*tomāke laṅghiyā kothā jive kṛṣṇa pāya
kṛṣṇa rāsa prakāṣilo tomāra kṛpāya*

Crossing *māyā* and entering Vraja-maṇḍala is impossible without the mercy of Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī-devī. Thus pray, "Please give me a chance to attain *vraja-sevā* and *vraja-bhāva*."

In the third part of the *mantra*, given by Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī, we pray to Nandagopa-sūta-devī. Who is that Devī? How can we understand Her and receive Her mercy? This Devī is *dyutimān*, brilliant and shining. By Her own effulgence, She gives us *darśana* of Nandagopa-sūta Kṛṣṇa. Nandagopa-sūta is glorious and very popular. How can we meet with Him? We pray to *that* Devī who has the power to show us Kṛṣṇa and establish our relationship with Him—that is, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Patim me kurute namaḥ. *Pati* does not mean only husband. It means one's maintainer, guardian, life and soul. So we pray, "*Patim me kurute namaḥ*—I offer *praṇāma* unto You. Please bestow a permanent relationship with Kṛṣṇa. May He be my maintainer, guardian, and dearmost beloved."

Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī gave this *mantra* to the *gopīs* and they chanted it with great determination to achieve their desired goal. Coming every morning to the bank of the Yamunā, they would first make a deity of Devī out of sand. They became surprised to see that even after bathing the deity, she did not

fall apart. They offered this deity articles offered in *arcana*, and then chanted the *mantra*. It seemed to them that Devī appeared directly before them in the form of the deity. By continually chanting the *mantra* they began to feel a swelling of happiness, born of awakened faith that Kṛṣṇa would surely accept them and that no mundane person would be able to touch or disturb them. They felt, "My body is now the property of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa will protect me and allow me to serve Him."

After their worship and *ārati*, the *gopīs* offered the deity to Yamunā-devī so that she would not be disrespected in their absence. They then returned to their homes before sunrise. During the day, the *gopīs* fasted and remained silent and meditative. In the evening, they took a small amount of milk and fruit to maintain their bodies.

The *gopīs'* parents would ask them, "What *vrata* are you following? Now *cāturmāsya* is over, so what *vrata* can you be following? What *mantra* do you chant and who is your *guru*?" But the *gopīs* only smiled and acted demure. Internally, by the power of their absorption, they began to witness the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in a continuous stream.

The *gopīs* had so much *bhakti* and *prema* for Kṛṣṇa and were worried about their future. As they meditated on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, at the same time they thought, "Soon I will be young and my body will be very attractive. Many dog-like men will come to attack and acquire me for their enjoyment. How can they be blind and not observe me? I desire to be the sole property of Kṛṣṇa." They were afraid that soon they would be married off and sent out of Vraja.

Later, when the *gopīs'* parents actually began to think about arranging their daughters' marriage, Yogamāyā and Kṛṣṇa orchestrated a wonderful pastime: Lord Brahmā came and stole all the calves and *sakhās*. As he hid them in a cave, Kṛṣṇa

considered He could not return home without all His friends and calves. He Himself then assumed the exact forms of each and every calf and friend. Kṛṣṇa could have immediately chastised Brahmā and recovered His associates, but to satisfy the desire of the Vrajavāsīs—of the mothers for Kṛṣṇa to be their son, of the gopīs for Kṛṣṇa to be their beloved, and of the cows for Him to be their calf—Kṛṣṇa acted as if nothing had happened and returned to Gokula. This pastime continued for one year.

Since millions of lives, the conditioned souls have been suffering from the poisonous influence of their material desires and lust for sense gratification. To become free of this poison, we must take shelter of the Vraja-devīs. We must worship and pray to them. By their glorious grace, we will achieve our spiritual form and accept Kṛṣṇa as our eternal maintainer and guardian. This is the meaning of *patī*. Śrīla Gurudeva gives us this conception. He engenders greed to enter this *mādhurya-rasa* and to be Śrīmatī's maidservant in Vraja. Then Kṛṣṇa will be so pleased. He will accept and maintain us with so much happiness, as we are the beloved maidservants of His dearmost Śrīmatījī. This is the goal of our performance of Kātyāyanī-vrata.

After following Kātyāyanī-vrata, the *sādhana-gopīs* renounced everything, taking real *sannyāsa*. As such, they attained the moods of the *nitya-siddha-gopīs* and were able to enter Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-maṇḍala*. Without the association of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, it is impossible to develop these moods.

*kṛti-sādhya bhavet sādhyā-
bhāvā sā sādhanābhidhā
nitya-siddhasya bhāvasya
prākṛtyaṁ hṛdi sādhyatā
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.2*

Sādhana-bhakti is the engagement of the mind and senses in the limbs of *bhakti* for the pur-

pose of attaining *bhāva-bhakti*. This *bhāva* is a potentiality that eternally exists in the heart of the living entity and it manifests in a heart purified by *sādhana*.

*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema sādhyā kabhu naya
śravaṇādi suddha-citte karaye udaya
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.107*

Kṛṣṇa-prema is an eternally established reality; it is not brought about by *sādhana*. It automatically manifests itself in the heart that is purified by the performance of the various limbs of *bhakti*, such as *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and so on.

This *nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema* (eternal perfected love for Kṛṣṇa) is present within the Vraja-devīs. When their hearts, out of compassion for a *sādhaka*, melt and a ray of their love comes down and enters into that *sādhaka's* heart, then it is possible for that *sādhaka* to attain their *bhāva*.

*śuddha-sattva-viśeṣātmā
prema-sūryāṁśu-sāmya-bhāk
rucibhiḥ citta-masṛṇya-
kṛd asau bhāva ucyate
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.3.1*

Bhāva-bhakti is constituted entirely of *viśuddha-sattva*. It is like a ray of the sun of *prema*, which softens the heart by its various tastes.

The *sakhās* are also present under the *gopīs'* guidance. Without hearing about the *gopīs'* pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, it is impossible to be rid of the heart disease of lust, which has been with the conditioned souls since time immemorial.

*vikṛḍitaṁ vraja vadhūbhir idaṁ ca viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānvito nuṣṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktim parāṁ bhagavati pratilabhya kāmam
hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.33.39*

A sober person, who first faithfully and continuously hears from his *guru* the narrations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's unprecedented *rāsa* dance with the *gopīs* of Vraja, and later describes those pastimes to others, will very soon attain *parā-bhakti*, or *prema-bhakti*, towards the Supreme Lord, thus becoming able to quickly dispel his *hṛd-roga*, his heart disease of lust.

However, a person who has no *śraddhā* (deep faith) should not speak or discuss these pastimes. Don't hear about these topics from any ordinary bogus person, for then the *hṛd-roga* will not go.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "If you hear this *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa stealing the clothes of the *gopīs*, the *hṛd-roga* that has been with you for millions of lives will be finished very soon." It is for this purpose that Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī gave the Kātyāyanī-vrata *mantra*. Anyone who desires to be freed of his *hṛd-roga* can chant this *mantra*, follow this *vrata*, and follow in the footsteps of the Vraja-devīs and Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī. Without following this process, we will continue to move in *māyā* for millions of lives. *Gopī-bhāva vinā na paya kṛṣṇa ki*—without the *gopī's bhāva*, Kṛṣṇa cannot be attained in this world.

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah*
Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī

May that Lord, who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacīdevī, be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what has not been given in a very long time—*mañjarī-bhāva*, the service of Śrīmatī Rādhikā as Her confidential maidservant.

May that Hari, who is *puraṭa-sundara*, more beautiful than molten gold, appears in our hearts. How? *Unnata-ujjvala-rasa*, by drinking the highest *rasa* of conjugal love. Without this, by having attachment to *mundane rasa*, Lord Hari will never appear in our hearts.

Sva-bhakti. "May Kṛṣṇa be happy"—to distribute this mood of service to Himself, Kṛṣṇa appeared as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. If anyone desires to attain this *rasa*, his life in Kali-yuga will be successful. Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to give this. This is His movement. If you step outside of His line, you do not have the consciousness of Caitanya's movement. Then you are not in Mahāprabhu's line.

Karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ. Kṛṣṇa is very merciful. As Mahāprabhu, He came with all His kindness and blessings, to give the *jīvas* this *sva-bhakti-śriyam*, the treasure of His own service.

Hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba sandīpitaḥ. My heart may have many diseases, but everything will be cleaned and purified when He comes and appears there.

Sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah. May that Śacīnandana, who is none other than Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, always appear in my heart.

Bhagavatī Paurṇamāsī gave this *mantra* to help us get entrance into that *unnata-ujjvala-rasa*, to help us meet the *nitya-siddha-gopīs*, join their class, and learn how to follow in their footsteps. If you try to follow this *vrata* and *mantra*, you are lucky. If you don't follow, you will remain and go further into the dark. What is the harm? Who will take responsibility for you? *Śāstra* and the *Guru-varga* are giving us so many chances. If we cannot take and accept these, then this is our misfortune. Punishment is always ready. *Yamarāja* is ready and waiting. Many friends and relatives are ready to punish us. My sons and

Our Gauḍīya Guru-varga

Explaining the Tattva on

daughters, wife or husband—all are soldiers in the army of *māyā*, ready to punish and torture me. My relatives and friends are the soldiers of Yamarāja. They come with sweetness and choke us. This pain is tasteful. If one's girlfriend bites or pinches, this is very sweet. But they are the soldiers of *māyā*. I am like a bull in a bull fight, and they all push their swords into me. My friends are like this. They peel and cut me, like a carrot or a radish. Hell is right here, with us. Yama-loka is not far away. All are here, waiting to torment us, but they cannot touch us if we are in the shelter of Yogamāyā. There we will fully be Kṛṣṇa's property. Why? Because drinking this *unnata-ujjala-rasa* will make us bright and strong. How can they attack us when we will be powerful and strong?

Therefore, every year we get this good chance. If for one month we follow this *vrata*, Mahā-yoginī will protect us and we will have no problem for *bhajana* and *bhakti*. This is good association. Everything in our life will be favorable for *bhakti*. We will not make announcements about our own glories, trying to collect followers. There will be no need or desire for name, fame, and popularity—this will be like sewage. Good intelligence will come, and then the Vraja-devīs will teach us how to serve in Sevā-kuṅja. Śrīla Gurudeva opened this Sevā-kuṅja and gave us all admission. We must remember our Guru-pāda-padma and follow in his footsteps. Our only hope and prayer is to be with him and follow him.

So therefore, by force, by trick or cheat, anyhow, follow this *vrata* and you will come to understand its result. Your life will be peaceful. You will have no more bad desires. All this is explained in *śāstra*; it is not my announcement or speculation. We should desire to follow the line and advice of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma. If the Guru-varga will be kind and help us, then we will be able to do so. ❧

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The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives an account of how the *gopīs* performed Kātyāyanī-pūjā 5000 years ago

śrī-śuka uvāca

hemante prathame māsi

nanda-vraja-kumārikāḥ

cerur haviṣyam bhuñjānāḥ

kātyāyanī-arcana-vratam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.1

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: During the first month of the winter or pre-winter frost, the young unmarried *vraja-kumāris* observed the *vrata* of worshiping Kātyāyanī-devī. For the whole month they ate only *haviṣyānna**.

āplutyāmbhasi kālindī jalānte codite 'ruṇe

kṛtvā pratikṛtiṁ devīm ānarcur nṛpa saikatīm

gandhair mālyaiḥ surabhibhir balibhir dhūpa-dīpakaiḥ

uccāvacaḥ copahārāiḥ pravāla-phala-taṇḍulaiḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.2–3



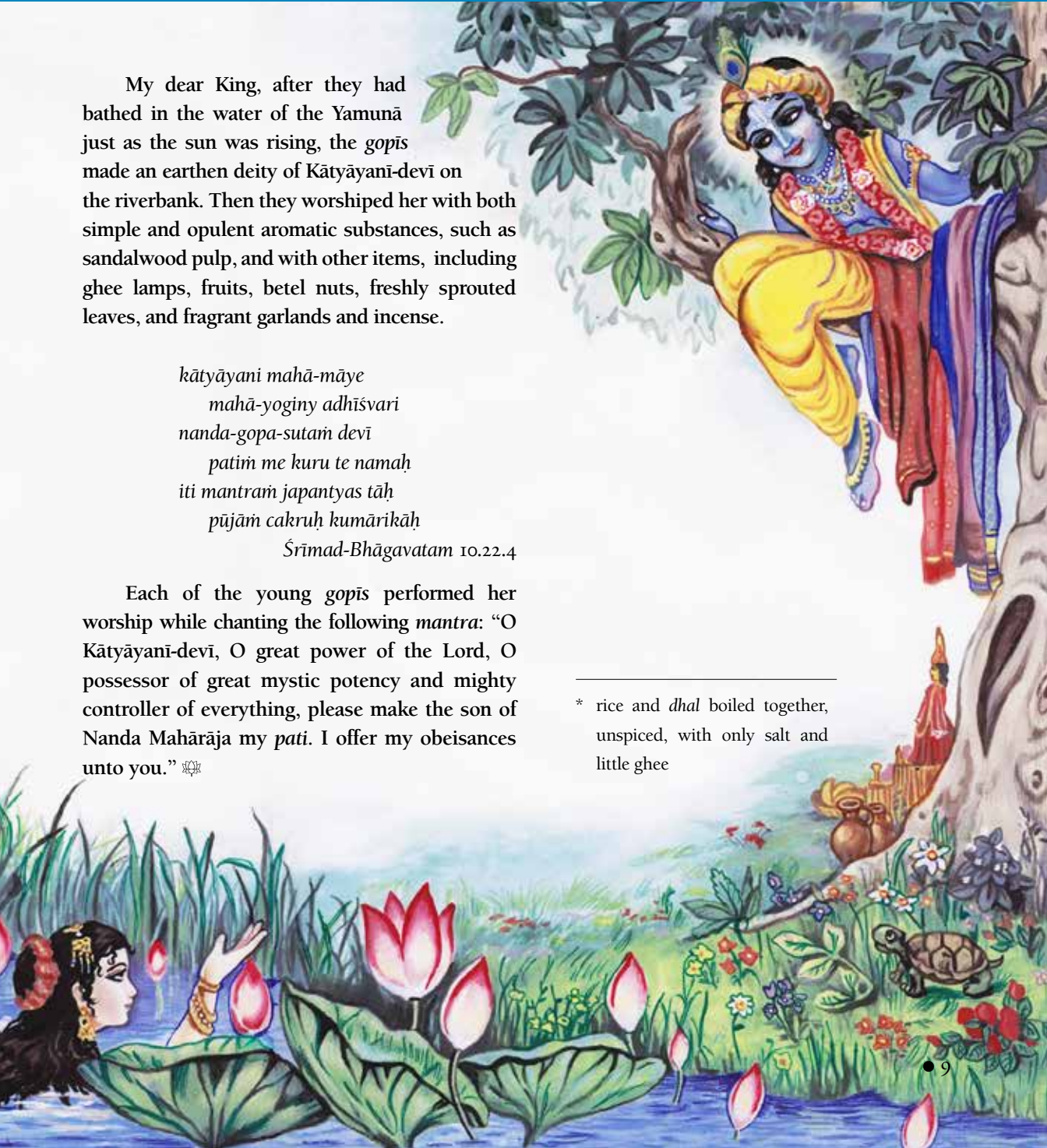
Śrī Kātyāyanī Vrata

My dear King, after they had bathed in the water of the Yamunā just as the sun was rising, the *gopīs* made an earthen deity of Kātyāyanī-devī on the riverbank. Then they worshiped her with both simple and opulent aromatic substances, such as sandalwood pulp, and with other items, including ghee lamps, fruits, betel nuts, freshly sprouted leaves, and fragrant garlands and incense.

*kātyāyanī mahā-māye
mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī
patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ
iti mantraṁ japantyaś tāḥ
pūjāṁ cakruḥ kumārikāḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.4*

Each of the young *gopīs* performed her worship while chanting the following *mantra*: “O Kātyāyanī-devī, O great power of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty controller of everything, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances unto you.” ❀

* rice and *dhal* boiled together, unspiced, with only salt and little ghee



Śrīla Kavi Karnapura Gosvāmī -

vidhi-pūrvakam kātyāyanī devī-pūjanam

The *gopīs* set the excellent *pūjā* items on the sandy white banks of the Yamunā, which glistened like camphor powder. They chose a clean, quiet place for *pūjā*. It was a secluded location, undisturbed by the wind, and free from the contamination of Yamunā foam and the footprints of birds and animals. Desiring to make a *murti* of goddess Kātyāyanī out of sand, the highly qualified *gopīs* spoke in sweet voices, resembling the soft cooing of cuckoos.

One *gopī* said, “O my friends! We have never observed the Kātyāyanī-vrata. Before initiating this auspicious act, we should remove the evil elements from the atmosphere. Are we going to conduct the worship individually or all together? Let us decide in such a way that we do not end up with a disaster. With faith and intelligence, we should take decision.”

Another *sakhī* said, “We should do the *pūjā* all together in a group. To perform *pūjā* separately is not good. Worshiping together will be more beneficial.”

The experts in *pūjā* chanted sweet verses, praising Kṛṣṇa’s attributes, while offering handfuls of fragrant flowers to a *murti* of Kātyāyanī molded from sand. Seeing the elegant *murti*, the *gopīs* felt that Bhagavatī Kātyāyanī herself had appeared in that *murti*. The *gopīs* thought, “How fortunate we are to perceive goddess Bhagavatī, even though we have not yet installed the deity.” Feeling that they had satisfied Devī Kātyāyanī, the *gopīs* felt elated. This strengthened their determination to execute the vow. To properly please Kātyāyanī, the *gopīs* did *manasī-pūjā* of the *murti* before commencing the worship. While concealing the confidential desires within their hearts and controlling their

minds, the *gopīs* silently fetched water from the Yamunā. The *gopīs* kept Kṛṣṇa locked inside their hearts like a precious treasure. After washing their hands and doing *ācamana*, they sat down on *kuśa āsanās*. Fixing their minds in the mode of goodness, the *gopīs* silently worshiped Kātyāyanī.

*prabha-viṣṇor-mahā-viṣṇor-
yoga-śaktis-tvam-uttamā
bhāsi kartum-akartum ca
'anyathā kartum-apīśvarī* (44)

“You are called Yogamāyā, the potency of Mahā-Viṣṇu, who possesses all energies. You have the power to do the impossible.

*parāt paratare! kṛṣṇapare!
parama-vaiṣṇavī!
paropakāra-parame!
parameśvari! te namaḥ* (48)

“You are expert in worshiping Kṛṣṇa, and you are the supreme Vaiṣṇavī. O Parameśvarī! O supreme goddess! You always engage in the welfare of others. We pay our respects unto you.”

Śrī Ananda Vṛndāvana Campu, Chapter 12
– Stealing the Garments of the Gopīs

**“Following the example of the
gopīs, the devotees sometimes
worship the goddess Kātyāyanī,
but they understand that
Kātyāyanī is an incarnation
of Yogamāyā.”**

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda
C.C. Madhya-līlā (8.90) Purport

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī -

atha āśraya-ālabanā nāyikāḥ
prathamam svīyā parakīyā iti dvi-vidhāḥ
kātyāyanī-vrata-parāṇām kanyānām
madhye yā gāndharveṇa vivāhitāḥ tāḥ svīyāḥ
Ujjvala-nīlamanī Kiraṇa, Nāyika-vibhāga 1.2

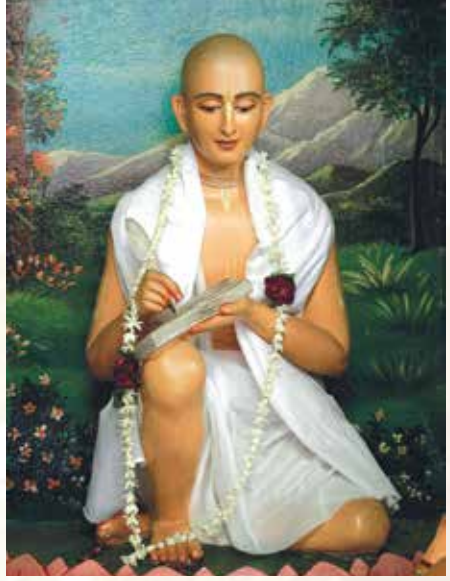
The nāyikās (heroines) are first divided into two types: *svakīyā** and *parakīyā***.

Among the young unmarried *gopīs* of Vraja, the *gopa-kanyās**** who observed *kātyāyanī-vrata* and who were married to Kṛṣṇa according to the *gandharva* ritual (a simple exchange of garlands) are in the *svakīyā* division.

* *Svakīyā* – This is a woman whose hand is accepted by her husband in marriage, with the *brāhmaṇas* and sacrificial fire as witnesses, in accordance with Vedic custom. She is totally devoted to obeying the instructions of her husband and never deviates from the religious principles of a virtuous wife (*patī-vratā-dharma*).

** *Parakīyā* – A woman who neglects worldly and celestial *dharma* and disregards the regulative principles of the institution of marriage (*vivāha-vidhi*), surrendering herself to a paramour in great eagerness, is known as *parakīyā*.

*** *kanyā* – Unmarried, shy young girls who are maintained by their mothers and fathers and who play with their confidantes without any fear or hesitation are known as *kanyās*. They possess qualities suitable for a *mugdhā-nāyikā* (innocent and captivated heroine). They are also known as *kanyakā*.



The following is from Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's Hindi translation and commentary of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* (3.16):

“This may raise a doubt as to how some of these damsels of Vraja can be considered *svakīyā*, or married. The qualities of *parakīyā-nāyikās*, which include concealed desire (*prachhanna-kāmukatā*), inhibition due to social censorship (*nivāraṇatā*) and being rarely able to meet with Kṛṣṇa (*durlabhatva*) are not found in *svakīyā-nāyikās*. [But all *vraja-kīśorīs* exhibit these *parakīyā* qualities,] so how can these *kīśorīs* be considered *svakīyā* when they reside in Vraja?

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has reconciled this for us. The Vraja damsels who were accepted by Kṛṣṇa according to the *Gandharva* system of marriage, in which the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* are married simply by exchanging flower garlands, are essentially known as *svakīyā*, yet there is no clear indication or revelation that they have actually married Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, they have concealed desire, inhibition and a limitation in regard to seeing and speaking with Kṛṣṇa, which are the qualities of *parakīyā*.” ❀

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī -

Śrī Bṛhad-bhagavatamṛta, Canto 1, Chapter 7,
Verses 104–106* commentary:

Some sixteen thousand, one hundred *gopīs* had with vows worshiped Kātyāyanī to obtain Me. To bring My mind somewhat to peace by seeing a likeness of them, I married the same number of you queens here in Dvārakā. (104–105)

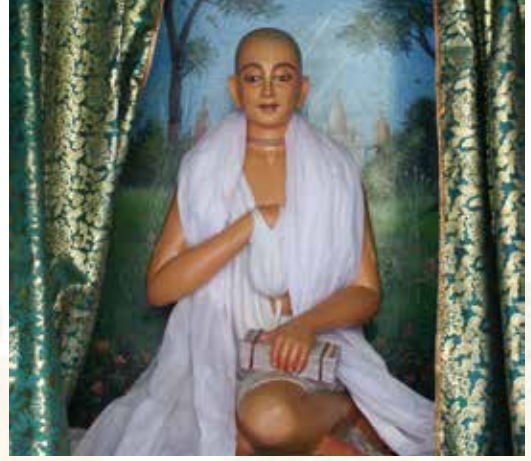
Of the young *gopīs* in Vraja, sixteen thousand attained Kṛṣṇa's intimate association. The *Mathurā-māhātmya* states, *gopyo gāyanti nṛtyanti sahasrāṇi ca śoḍaśa*: "Sixteen thousand *gopīs* were singing and dancing." The present verse specifies the number of those most fortunate *gopīs* as 16,100, although the word *ca* implies that there were actually more. All the *gopīs* were extremely attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but only some of them earned Kṛṣṇa's complete satisfaction by undergoing the Kātyāyanī-vrata to obtain Him as their husband. These were the *gopīs* who most zealously wanted Kṛṣṇa as their own. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.4) records their prayer:

*kātyāyani mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ
iti mantraṁ japantyāsa tāḥ pūjāṁ cakruḥ kumārīkāḥ*

[Each of the young *gopīs* performed her worship while chanting the following *mantra*: "O Kātyāyanī-devī, O great power of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty controller of everything, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances unto you."]

No one can match the *gopīs'* attractive sway over Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa accepted His queens as

* *śoḍaśānāṁ sahasrāṇāṁ sa-śatānāṁ mad-āptaye
kṛta-kātyāyanī-pūjā-vratānāṁ gopa-yoṣitām* (104)
*nidarśanād iva svīyaṁ kiñcit svasthayitum manaḥ
tāvatya eva yūyaṁ vai mayātraitā vivāhitāḥ* (105)
*aho bhāmini jānīhi tat tan mama mahā-sukhaṁ
mahimāpi sa mām hitvā tasthau tatrocitāspade* (106)



substitutes in His pastimes at Dvārakā. The principal queens of Dvārakā are in fact direct expansions of the principal *gopīs*.

Ah, willful woman**, please understand. All that I relished in Vraja gave Me the highest pleasure. And though the glory of those times has now abandoned Me, it still resides in that most worthy place. (106)

By saying this, Kṛṣṇa admits that He is not as happy in Dvārakā as He was in Vṛndāvana. He cannot feel fully satisfied when separated from the *gopīs*.

Excerpt from Śrī Bṛhad-bhagavatamṛta, Canto 2, Chapter 7, verse 121*** commentary:

In this way, all the cowherd boys, having accumulated the results of pious activities for many lives, used to play with Kṛṣṇa, who for impersonalist *jñānīs* is realization of the bliss of Brahman, who for devotees in eternal servitorship is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and who for ordinary persons is but another ordinary child. (121)

Amazed by the incomparable good fortune of the cowherd boys, Śrī Bādarāyaṇi continues to praise

** Speaking to Śrī Satyabhāmā (*aho bhāmini*).

*** *itthaṁ satāṁ brahma-sukhānubhūtyā
dāsyāṁ gatānāṁ para-daivatena
māyāśritānāṁ nara-dārakeṇa
ākāṁ vijahruḥ kṛta-punya-puñjāḥ* (121)

them for joining Kṛṣṇa in His cow-tending and other such pastimes. By associating so intimately with Kṛṣṇa, these boys were directly experiencing the transcendental happiness of Brahman realization. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme worshipable Deity of saints (*satām*) who have been given the privilege to enter His service. *Satām* also means “liberated souls.” Kṛṣṇa’s friends in Vraja are liberated persons who take part in the happiness of knowing Brahman, the Absolute Truth. Most people, however, are not liberated. They are *māyāśrita*, bewildered by the Supreme Lord’s power of illusion, and therefore they consider Kṛṣṇa an ordinary cowherd boy (*nara-dāraka*). *Satām* can also be understood to indicate the seekers of spiritual knowledge, who realize Kṛṣṇa in His impersonal Brahman feature and enjoy the happiness of knowing Brahman in that way. But to the Vaiṣṇava devotees who consider themselves Kṛṣṇa’s servants (*dāsyam gatānām*), Kṛṣṇa, the supreme master (*para-daivata*), gives Himself, submitting Himself to their control. Material nature bewilders the entire creation, but Kṛṣṇa’s pure servants bewilder Him by the strength of their pure love and thus defeat material nature.

Taken in another sense, *māyāśritānām* refers to Kṛṣṇa’s beloved *gopīs*, who worshiped the goddess Māyā with choice *mantras*:

*kātyāyāni mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ*

These *gopīs* could see Kṛṣṇa only as an attractive youth (*nara-dāraka*). They gave no thought to His godly omnipotence. As if ordinary girls, they simply focused their attention on Him as the sole object of their desire and affection. Or—another reading—the same Kṛṣṇa who is the constant companion of the cowherd boys is also amorous appeal personified for all human females (*nara-dārāḥ*). Or else Kṛṣṇa figuratively tears apart all persons (*narān dārayati*) by filling

their hearts with unique love for Him. Of course, Kṛṣṇa’s attraction in the conjugal *rasa* is most appropriately described in relation to women, but because the *gopīs* presume every human being to be like themselves, they think that Kṛṣṇa tears apart the heart of everyone and fills it with love. This presumption is suggested by the use of the masculine form *nara-dārakeṇa*, which can be grammatically understood to include both males and females.

Accepting that *māyāśritānām* refers to the *gopīs*, in this verse we have a hierarchy in which the devotees in eternal servitorship are higher than the *jñānīs*, and the *gopīs* are still higher. Thus in this verse, which glorifies the cowherd boys, the greatness of the *gopīs* is also to be seen.... The *gopīs* are always beside themselves with transcendental anxiety due to the excessive love they feel for Kṛṣṇa. They usually cannot be with Him during the day, and even in their nocturnal meetings they do not feel as completely free to enjoy with Him as they would like, because of the constant threat of opposition from their husbands and families. The cowherd boys, on the other hand, are always free to play with Kṛṣṇa in varieties of pastimes, both at home and in the forest. Therefore their good fortune is most exceptional.

This does not contradict the many statements of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that confirm that the blessed *gopīs* are more exalted and fortunate than all other beings; rather, it indicates that the revered Śukadeva, in the core of his heart, is a follower of the *gopīs’* mood of devotion and therefore while elaborating on the wonderful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys and glorifying the boys for being able to play constantly with Kṛṣṇa in the forest he speaks like the *gopīs* themselves. ❧

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Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī -

When the best of women heard this, when He hinted that they should marry according to Gandharva rites, their eyes showed embarrassment, and they waited for the time of acceptance. Increasing His powers for accepting them in marriage, He again spoke pure words to them.

Mutual acceptance of the bride and groom is the method of Gandharva marriage. Mutual acceptance is the highest *dharma* and manifests naturally between a couple. Having reached success by the Gandharva method of marriage, please return to Vraja. On a night very soon, we will meet.

Gopāla-campū 21.39

The last day of the worship and vows had passed. Joyful on attaining Kṛṣṇa as their husband, they forgot the worship and returned to Vraja. All their actions were filled with the happiness of attaining Him. They had obtained the happiness of Kṛṣṇa accepting to be their husband as a result of their *prema*, for which reason they had worshiped Kātyāyanī. What more could be attained after this?

Gopāla-campū 21.42



In his commentary to *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*, 5th Chapter, Verse 3, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains who is real Durgā:

“In the *Gautamiya-tantra*, it has been stated:

*yaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ saiva durgā syād
yā durgā kṛṣṇa eva saḥ
anayor antaraḍarśī
saṁsārān no vimucyate*



“If the *gopīs* were worshiping Kātyāyanī, then why did Śrī Kṛṣṇa have to come personally to give the benediction? The reason is that Kṛṣṇa and His *svarūpa-śakti* Yogamāyā (Kātyāyanī) are non-different: *śakti-śaktimātor abhedaḥ*. Therefore, in this case, *Kātyāyanī-pūjā* is the same as the *pūjā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

Ācārya Kesari: Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī,
Part 3 - A philosophical assembly in Keśavapura

Kṛṣṇa is Durgā and Durgā is Kṛṣṇa. Those who see any difference between these two are never liberated from the endless chain of birth and death.

Therefore, in this quotation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own internal potency has been referred to by the name of Durgā. This Durgā is not the Durgā who is a partial manifestation of *māyā*. In the Nirukti dictionary it is mentioned: “*kṛcchreṇa durārāadhanādi-bahu-prayāsena gamyate jñāyate* — that personality who is known with great endeavor by the performance of extremely severe *sādhana* is called Durgā.

It is also stated in the *Nārada-pañcarātra*:

*jānāty ekā parā kāntā
saiva durgā tadātmikā
yā parā paramā śaktir
mahā-viṣṇu-svarūpiṇī
yasyā vijñāna-mātreṇa
parāṇāṁ paramātmānaḥ
muhūrtād eva devasya
prāptir bhavati nānyathā
ekeyaṁ prema-sarvasva-
bhāvā śrī-gokuleśvarī
yathā mugdhaṁ jagat sarvaṁ
sarva-dehābhīmāninaḥ*

She who is the highest, most excellent potency, or Mahā-Viṣṇu-svarūpiṇī, whose very self is Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇātātmikā*), and who is the best of all His beloveds, is called Durgā.

One who realizes Her surely attains the supreme Paramātmā, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in less than a moment; there is not even the slightest doubt in this regard.

She is Gokuleśvarī Śrī Rādhā, the full embodiment of spontaneous love and the personification of *mahābhāva*. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the

supreme *īśvara* of all existence and the God among gods, is attained by Her mercy. Śrī Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa's internal potency, and She performs worship of Her most beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the entire wealth of Her devotion and service. [Alternatively, Her most beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa always engages in Her worship with the entire wealth of His devotion and service.]

That very Śrī Rādhā, the dearest internal potency of Bhagavān, is known only to those who perform extraordinarily difficult worship. Therefore, saintly persons refer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved mistress of undivided *rasa* by the name of Durgā. His covering potency, Mahāmāyā, is the controller of all the mundane worlds, and it covers and bewilders the entire population of living beings who identify with their material bodies.

The following statement by Śrī Durgā can be found in the *Sammohana-tantra*:

*yan nāmnā nāmnī durgāham
guṇair guṇavatī hy aham
yad vaibhavaṁ mahā-lakṣmī
rādhā nityā parādvayā*

The name Durgā, by which I am known, is Her name. The qualities for which I am famous are Her qualities. The majesty with which I am resplendent is Her majesty. That Mahā-Lakṣmī, Śrī Rādhā, is non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She is His dearest sweetheart and the crest-jewel of His beloveds.” ❧

[From Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's english edition of *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā*
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Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

Excerpts from his *Sārārtha Darśini*, Tenth Canto
Commentaries of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

*kātyāyani mahā-māye, mahā-yoginy adhiśvañ
nanda-gopa-sutam devī, patim me kuru te namah,
iti mantram japantyas tāh, pūjām cakruḥ kamārikāh*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.4

Each of the young *gopīs* performed her worship while chanting the following *mantra*:
“O Kātyāyanī-devī, O great power of the Lord,
O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty
controller of everything, please make the son of
Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances
unto you.”

The *gopīs* prayed, “Oh Kātyāyanī! Please make
the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*.”

But goddess Kātyāyanī may object, “When
you say please do it, what does that have to do
with me? You should be allowed to do whatever
you wish in this matter. I, on the other hand, shall
simply inspire your parents to do the needful in this
matter. Therefore, you should rather use the words,
‘Please cause someone to do it, or please give this.’”

Anticipating this objection, the *gopīs* say in
anxiety, “O great *yoginī*! My connection with Kṛṣṇa
should be immediately arranged by you, without
the unnecessary disturbance of my parents. I am
too anxious for this and cannot wait.

“Besides Kṛṣṇa has not taken brahminical
initiation yet, so He is not ready for marriage.
Therefore, Goddess, overlook the proper rituals of
marriage, and in the Gandharva style let us marry
Kṛṣṇa immediately.” Such is the implication.
[Gandharva marriage is a love marriage by
personal agreement without parental sanction]

Kātyāyanī may object, “You are thinking of
Kṛṣṇa as your husband and are anxious to have



intimate connection with Him even without your
parents’ knowing. But how can I possibly fulfill
this desire of yours?”

The *gopī* replies, “Oh Adhiśvarī! You have all
powers; therefore nothing is impossible for you.
You are Mahāmāyā, the supreme enchantress!
Therefore, by the power of illusion you should
bewilder my parents, so they will not know of my
marriage and the secret of my intimate association
with Kṛṣṇa.”

Taking the word Devī to mean *divyati* (play),
it refers to Kṛṣṇa who plays and causes one to play
(*devyati*). Therefore, the *gopī* says, “Devī means
Kṛṣṇa is indeed the husband, so please make
Him so. Such a status of being a husband can be
affected without marriage, and thus there is no
harm even if I am married to some other cowherd
man.” In this way, each of the *gopīs* separately
meditates on the meaning of the *mantra*, chanted
to petition goddess Kātyāyanī.

The goddess Durgā mentioned in this verse is not the illusory energy of Kṛṣṇa called Mahāmāyā but rather the internal potency (*cit-śakti*) of the Lord known as Yogamāyā. The distinction between the internal and external potency of the Lord is described in the *Nārada-pañcarātra*, in the conversation between *śruti* and *vidyā*:

“Mahā-Viṣṇu’s inferior potency, known as Durgā, is dedicated to His loving service. Being the Lord’s potency, this inferior energy is nondifferent from Him (*mahā-viṣṇu-svarūpinī*).”

The name Durgā is sometimes used to refer to the internal, superior potency, as stated in the *Pañcarātra*:

“In all *mantras* used to worship Kṛṣṇa, the presiding deity is the spiritual Durgā.” Thus in the transcendental sound vibrations glorifying and worshiping the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the presiding deity of the particular *mantra* or hymn is called Durgā. To confuse the Yogamāyā Durgā with the Mahāmāyā Durgā is a mistake.

Furthermore, although the pastimes of Vraja are on the platform of pure transcendence (*śuddha-sattva*), they somewhat resemble material pastimes in appearance. Therefore, there is no fault in the *gopīs*’ worship of Durgā, or Mahāmāyā. Independent thinkers who think that the name of Durgā and Mahāmāyā refer exclusively to the external potency of the Lord have no chance of getting even a touch of the breeze carrying the scent of *prema* on their body. This is from *Vaiṣṇava-tosani*.

*evam māsam vrataṁ ceruḥ
kumāryaḥ kṛṣṇa-cetasah
bhadrakālīm samānarcur
bhūyān nanda-sutaḥ patih
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.5*

Thus, for a whole month, the unmarried *gopīs* carried out their vow and properly worshiped the goddess Bhadrakālī, fully absorbing their hearts in Kṛṣṇa meditating: “May the son of King Nanda become my *pati*.”

They worshiped Bhadrakālī with the vow, “May the son of Nanda be my *pati*.”

When the *gopīs* saw Kṛṣṇa’s determination, they were filled with loving ecstasy. Although embarrassed, they were overjoyed to receive such attention from Kṛṣṇa. He was joking with them as if they were His wives or girlfriends, and the *gopīs*’ only desire was to achieve such a relationship with Him.

*dṛḍham pralabdhas trapayā ca hāpitāḥ
prastobhitāḥ kridana-vac ca kārītāḥ
vastrāṇi caivāpahṛtāny athāpy amum
tā nābhyasūyan priya-saṅga-nirvṛtāḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.22*

Although the *gopīs* had been thoroughly tricked, deprived of their modesty, ridiculed and made an object of play and although their clothing had been taken away, they did not feel inimical toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rather, they were simply happy to have this chance to associate with their beloved.

Even though the *gopīs* were treated contemptuously, they still acted favorably toward their beloved by doing what would have been impossible for others to do. And astonishingly, the *gopīs* became blissful by this. The *gopīs* had been deceived to the extreme by Kṛṣṇa’s words criticizing their nakedness. After forcing them to give up their modesty, Kṛṣṇa mocked them, insisting that they come get their clothing. He made the *vraja-kumārīs* dance like puppets (*kṛīḍana-vat*).

When Kṛṣṇa said, “I am telling the truth. This is not a joke,” the *gopīs* did not find fault in Him. Nor did they criticize Kṛṣṇa when He told them to hold their folded hands above their heads as atonement. Though all this was done to them, the *gopīs* felt blissful because they got to meet their beloved (*priya*). They actually became even more attached to Kṛṣṇa for doing all these things.

The conclusion is that when one is considered dear (*priya*), whatever that dear one does is experienced with pleasure, even if it gives pain.

saṅkalpo viditah sādhyo, bhavatinām mad-arcanam, mayānumoditah so 'sau, satyo bhavitum arhati

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.25

[Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:] O saintly girls, I understand that your real intent in this austerity has been to worship Me. I approve of this and thus your endeavors must bear fruit.

Kṛṣṇa said, “O chaste women! Though out of modesty you have not mentioned that your real purpose (*saṅkalpa*) in worshiping Me (*mad-arcanam*) was to please Me, I know and I accept it. Because your desire was pure it will be fulfilled. Since I am controlled by *prema*, nothing is impossible for My *premī-bhaktas* to attain.”

At this point, the *kṛpā-śakti*, mercy potency, made the Lord's power more evident among the *gopīs*, though the power was still under the control of *prema*, and subject to the pastimes. By this power, Kṛṣṇa understood the *gopīs* were performing austerities in the worship of Kātyāyanī to attain Him, and thus He gave them the results.

nā mayy āveśita-dhiyām, kāmāḥ kāmāya kalpate, bharjitā kvathitā dhānāḥ, prāyo bijāya neśate

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.26

The desire of those whose hearts are fixed on Me does not lead to material desire for mundane enjoyment, just as grains burned by the sun and then cooked can no longer sprout.

Kṛṣṇa said, “If someone worships Me impurely or improperly, I can make that offering pure because I am full of good qualities. What then to say of your absolutely pure desire and pure love? The desire of one absorbed in Me does not lead to material desire for sense enjoyment. Because the object of love is the topmost spiritual entity, it results in the disappearance of material desire. Just as barleycorns roasted in the fire can never grow new sprouts.”

yātābalā vrajam siddha, mayemā ramasyathā kṣapāḥ, yad uddiśya vratam idam, cerur āryārcanam satih

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.27

Go now, O pure-hearted, back to Vraja. Your desire is fulfilled, for in My association you will enjoy the coming nights. After all, this was the reason for performing Kātyāyanī-vrata.

Bearing in mind that the most auspicious time for a lover's first tryst is the night, Kṛṣṇa speaks like this to the *gopīs*.

Kṛṣṇa said, “O women, although you are perfected (*siddha*) beings, you have taken the role of *sādhakas* (practitioners) to increase the sweetness of My pastimes on earth. In the near future (*imā kṣapā*) you will enjoy (*ramasyathā*) with Me, and thus fulfill the purpose (*yat*) for which you under took austerities in worshiping Durgā (*ārya*). O pure women! (*satī*).” ❧

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A Prayer to Yogamāyā

Āmāra Samāna Hīna

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



*āmāra samāna hīna nāhi e saṁsāre
asthira ha'yechi poḍi' bhava pārābāre* (1)

The likes of such a lowly soul as me is not to be found anywhere in this world. Thus I have become most agitated due to falling into this vast ocean of material existence.

*kuladevī yogamāyā more kṛpā kori'
āvaraṇa sambaribe kabe viśvodarī* (2)

O Yogamāyā! When will you show mercy to me by lifting up the curtain of illusion with which you cover the universe in your external form of Mahāmāyā? You are known as Kula-devī, the traditional worshipable goddess of all the Vaiṣṇavas dynasties.

*śunechi āgame-vede mahimā tomāra
śrī-kṛṣṇa-vimukhe bāndhi' karāo saṁsāra* (3)

I have heard of your glories and activities from the Vedic literatures. You take all those souls who are averse to Kṛṣṇa and bind them within the material world.

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-sāmmukhya jā'ra bhāgya-krame hoyā
tā're mukti diyā koro aśoka abhaya* (4)

To that person whose good fortune gradually dawns, allowing him to again become favorably disposed to Kṛṣṇa, you award liberation and make him free from all grief and fear.

*e dāse janani! kori' akaitava doyā
vṛndāvane deha sthāna tumi yogamāyā* (5)

Oh my dear Mother! Showing your causeless mercy to this servant, give me a place in Vṛndāvana, for you are Yogamāyā Herself (the internal energy of yoga, or union).

*tomāke laṅghiyā kothā jive kṛṣṇa pāya
kṛṣṇa rāsa prakatilo tomāra kṛpāya* (6)

Without complying with you, no soul at any time can get Kṛṣṇa, for the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is all enacted only by your mercy.

*tumi kṛṣṇa-sahacarī jagata-janani
tumi dekhāile more kṛṣṇa-cintāmaṇi* (7)

You are the devoted follower of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and you are the Mother of the universe. You have shown me the transcendental touchstone of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*niṣkapāṭa ho'ye mātā cāo mora pāne
vaiṣṇave viśwāsa vṛddhi ha'ka prati-ksaṇe* (8)

My dear Mother, I sincerely wish that you will let my faith in the Vaiṣṇavas increase at every moment.

*vaiṣṇava-caraṇa vinā bhava-parābāra
bhakativinoda nāre hoibāre pāra* (9)

Without the lotus feet of the devotees of the Lord, Bhaktivinoda is not able to cross to the other side of this ocean of material existence. ❁



A FEW WORDS

— Jagad Guru Om Viṣṇupada Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta

Śrī Gaurasundara is Svayam Bhagavān Paratattva. His words of instruction are His limbs. The preachers of His message are His extended limbs. Śrī Gaurasundara's teachings are the weapons that nullify the degrading influence of Kali. Those who are established in such teachings are His associates. I am supplicating a few words of mine to the preachers of Gaurasundara's teachings. All the Gauḍīyas have assemble here to worship Śrī Gaurasundara, along with His associates and extended limbs.

The Prabhu of my Prabhu (Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja) has presented the essence of all His teachings in these following words:

(1) We should be humbler than a blade of grass (*tṛnad-api-sunīcena*).

(2) We should be as tolerant as trees (*taror-iva-sahiṣṇunā*).

(3) We should respect all others without expecting any in return (*amāninā-mānadena*).

(4) It is the duty of all the souls to continuously perform *hari-kīrtana* in such a state (*kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*).

My Prabhu attracted me to his lotus feet, having embodied all these instructions of Śrī Gaurasundara. I am also requesting all my well-wishers to follow these principles if they really wish to attract all the souls of this world to the all-encompassing truth. The crest-jewel of all *sannyāsīs*, Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī, has given the following instruction to the *tridaṇḍi-bhikṣus* (*sannyāsīs*):

*dante nidhāya tṛṇakam padayor nipatya
kṛtvā ca kaku-śatam etad aham bravīmi
he sādhaḥ sakalam eva vihāya dūrād
caitanya-candra-carāṇe kurutānurāgam*

Following in the footsteps of our Mahājanas, I am also requesting my well-wishers to follow these instructions. Śrī Caitanyadeva is the topmost teacher who embodies

OF MINE

Sarasvātī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

the highest ideal of transcendence. We will have to repeat the instructions He has given in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, beginning with ‘*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*’. We are the carriers of *śrauta-vāṇī* (the message that is heard). We should never exhibit our arrogance or conceit—this should always be remembered.

We should not restrict ourselves in offering the resident of this world their due respect. We will request everyone to bless us with *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. Regardless of how many favorable or unfavorable elements that present themselves before us, we will offer them our respect and continuously be engaged in our *prema-sevā* to our *iṣṭadeva* (worshipable Lord). This is the *mantra* of our worshipful Vrajavāsīs:

*kātyāyāni mahā-māye
mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī
patim me kuru te namaḥ*

[O Kātyāyānī-devī, O great power of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty controller of everything, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances unto you.]

*vṛndāvanāvani-pate! jaya soma soma maule
sanaka sanandana-sanātana-nāradeḍya
gopīśvara! vraja-vilāsi yugāṅghri padme
prema prayaccha nirupādhi namo namas te
(Saṅkalpa-kalpa-druma 103,
Śrīla Visvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura)*

[“O gatekeeper of Vṛndāvana! O Soma, O you whose forehead is decorated with the moon, and

who is worshipful for the sages headed by Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Nārada, all glories to you! O Gopīśvara! Desiring that you bestow upon me *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, who perform joyous pastimes in Vraja-dhāma, I offer obeisances unto you, time and time again.”]

While preaching Śrī Gaurasundara’s message (*hari-kīrtana*) to the souls of this world, we will have to see, listen, and learn from this world. But we should never forget that all the knowledge and opulence of this world is perpetually present to nourish our service to Śrī Guru. If the highest forms of knowledge and learning present themselves to serve a particle of dust from the lotus feet of Gurupāda-padma—only then will such knowledge and learning bear fruit. Or else, such knowledge and learning are in vain for they are like a fleeting mirage. This should always be remembered.

I consider it to be my duty to remind my well-wishers (who are going to preach in the West) of the following instructions of my Prabhu, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

*anāsaktasya viṣayān yathārham upayuñ jataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate
prāpañcikatayā buddhyā hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo vairāgyam phalgu kathyate
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.255–256*

[One who is not attached to satisfying his senses yet accepts everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa, is rightly situated above possessiveness. However, if those desiring liberation renounce the things of this world, thinking them to be material, and fail to realize that everything is related to Śrī Hari, such renunciation is considered superficial, false renunciation.]

While describing *śloka*s such as ‘*jayati-jayati nāmānanda rūpaṁ murārera*’, Śrīla Sanātāna

Gosvāmī has elucidated on the meaning of the aphorism, ‘*anāvṛtti-śabdāt, anāvṛtti-śabdāt.*’ I request my well-wishers to constantly repeat these instructions of our Guruvarga while offering their heartfelt respect to everyone they meet. The people you are going to preach to are greatly advanced in enhancing their worldly requirements. Their sense of discrimination is refined and they are to be respected. By presenting factual devotional conclusions to them, they will become suitable recipients of *śrauta-vāṇī*. We are to be greatly hopeful in this regard. By taking shelter of *sahiṣṇutā* (tolerance), we will continuously perform *hari-kīrtana* in an honest manner. This will inevitably lead to a lasting affect on them.

While engaged in our preaching services, we should be careful to not imbibe a competitive spirit. We are only going door to door to preach the Truth. We should not fear from anyone’s disrespect or respect. We should only strive for the happiness of our Prabhu. We need only render sincere service to our Prabhu. We should remind ourselves that we are not going to preach to flatter anyone for their worldly learning or exalted lineage. Neither should we be repulsed by a person’s foolishness for such a state has only arisen because of a flawed conception of the real self (*svarūpa-bhrānti*). The people of this world are greatly advanced than us in terms of material amenities. We don’t desire such amenities. We, *tridaṇḍī-bhikṣus*, are only going to do *kīrtana* of Caitanya-vāṇī. Except for the happiness of Śrī Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas, we don’t desire anything else. We are only the medium of their instructions. A *tridaṇḍī-bhikṣuk* is a living *mṛdaṅga* of Śrī Caitanya. This *mṛdaṅga* will continuously

be played upon while being under the shelter of Śrī Gurupāda-padma.

The continuous guidance and instructions of Śrī Guru-Vaiṣṇavas will be the polestar of our lives. We will wave the flag of Bhagavān Śrī Gaurasundara’s instructions and follow the *dharma* of a *parivrājaka* (a wandering mendicant). We have accepted the *parivrājaka-dharma* to only preach the innermost heart’s desire of Śrī Guru Gaurāṅga. We will be initiated into *kīrtana* by placing ourselves under the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva. As a result, we will not be overcome by the desire to explore different places for our sense-pleasure. The hidden deity of extraneous desires will not have the courage to disturb us.

Our *nitya-dharma* is to only serve *śrī gaurā-nāma*, *śrī gaurā-dhāma* (Gaura’s holy abode), and *śrī gaurā-kāma* (Gaura’s desires). We will only subsist on *mādhukarī-bhikṣā* (likened to the collection of honey from different flowers by a bee) to preach the ideals of our Maṭha (spiritual refuge). We are not enjoyers or renunciants. We only nourish the topmost desire of carrying the shoes of our transcendental forefathers. By being humbler than a blade of grass, we will tell everyone that complete dependence on the Absolute Truth is the actual freedom of expression. Such freedom renders its material counterpart useless. Such material freedom is a part of this world, which is a perverted reflection of the spiritual world. By imbibing the sixfold principles of surrender that have been authorized by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu, we will continuously be engaged in *hari-kīrtana*. ❧

[Translated from *Śrī Bhāgavat Patrikā*
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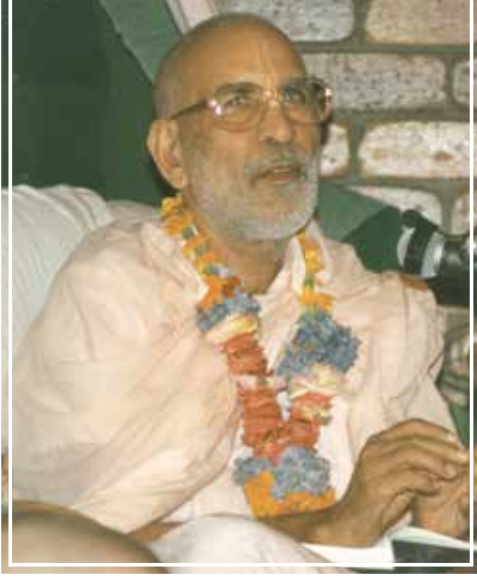
The Gopīs Who Observed The Vow To Worship Kātyāyanī

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

*hemante prathame māsi
nanda-vraja-kamārikāḥ
cerur haviṣyam bhuñjānāḥ
kātyāyany-arcana-vratam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.1)*

During the first month of the winter or pre-winter frost, the young unmarried *vraja-kumārīs* observed the *vrata* of worshiping Kātyāyanī-devī. For the whole month they ate only *haviṣyānna*.





The *gopīs* who observed the vow to worship Kātyāyanī were young and unmarried. What, then, was Śrī Kṛṣṇa's age at this time? Kṛṣṇa had left Gokula at the age of three and a half. According to Śrīla Vyāsadeva and Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, He was seven years old when He lifted the mountain, Girirāja Govardhana, on the little finger of His left hand. After He lifted Girirāja, all the elders and their priests gathered together and told Nanda Bābā, "You should not treat Kṛṣṇa as if He were your son. He is actually not your son. He may be a demi-god, or perhaps He is God, or someone like God. We have heard that Nārāyaṇa Himself has come in the form of Kṛṣṇa, and perhaps it is true. So you should not treat Him like an ordinary boy. Do not bind His hands, and do not chastise or punish Him. He is only seven years old, and yet He lifted a mountain like Govardhana. How is that possible? This is indeed mysterious."

"Oh," Nanda Bābā laughed. "I have heard that *gopas* only become mature and intelligent at the age of eighty. They cannot properly decide anything before then, because their minds are not fixed. Kṛṣṇa is just an ordinary boy."

"God has far more good qualities than even the perfected saints. Such saints do not become angry,

and they are not disturbed by hunger, thirst, or any other material distress. They do not steal or tell lies.

"Kṛṣṇa tells lies. He weeps and becomes angry. He plays tricks on people, and He is naughty in so many other ways. He some-times cries for butter and sugar candy. If He does not get what He wants, He becomes furious and hurls all the items in our home onto the ground, and then scatters them here and there.

"This is conclusive proof that He is not God. In any case, even if you would insist that He is God, He is still my son, so I will admonish and punish Him and treat Him as a father should treat his child."

Nanda Bābā continued to laugh at the notion that Kṛṣṇa is God; then Yogamāyā came, and by her influence, everyone present forgot this idea.

This incident took place during the month of Kārtika, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa was seven years old, and it was just after Kārtika that the *gopīs* worshiped Kātyāyanī.

There were two groups of *gopīs*, married and unmarried. Although it was the unmarried *gopīs* who worshiped Kātyāyanī, the married *gopīs* like Lalitā, Viśākhā, and Śrīmatī Rādhikā also had *pūrvā-rāga* (the *gopīs'* tender love for Kṛṣṇa before their first intimate meeting with Him). This is because, although they had met with Him so many times, they always felt the excited anticipation of a first meeting.

The unmarried *gopīs* were somewhat younger than the married *gopīs*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is thirteen and a half years old, and Kṛṣṇa is fourteen. Lalitā is twenty-seven days older than Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and Viśākhā was born on the same day as Rādhikā. Rūpa Mañjarī and Rati Mañjarī are a little over twelve years, so they are about one and a half years younger than Kṛṣṇa. This means that when Kṛṣṇa was seven years old, the *gopīs* who were engaged in the worship of Kātyāyanī-devī were about six; but they already had love and affection for Him. Their

love for Kṛṣṇa was not *kāma*, amorous affection, because *kāma* is not possible at such an age. They loved Him deeply, but without *kāma*.

Kṛṣṇa told those *gopīs* engaged in worship, “Next year, during the autumn season, I will fulfill your desires.” Then, a year later, when Kṛṣṇa was about eight years old, He played His flute to call the *gopīs* to the *rāsa* dance.

It is said that Kṛṣṇa was in Vṛndāvana until He was ten years old, and within that time He performed *rāsa-līlā* as well as all His Vṛndāvana pastimes. In other words, He appeared to be fourteen years old when He was actually only ten, and the *gopīs* also appeared to be older than they were. Speaking in a humorous mood, typical of the playful nature of a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has said that they grew up very quickly because they used to eat so much butter and sugar candy. In actual fact, the reason they appeared to be teenagers is because of the influence of Yogamāyā.

In their previous births, some of the young unmarried *gopīs* had been personified Vedic scriptures called *śrutis*, and they are known as *śruti-cārī gopīs*. Some had been personified Upaniṣads, and are known as *upaniṣad-cārī gopīs*.* Some had been sages from the Daṇḍakāraṇya forest (*daṇḍakāraṇya-ṛṣis*), some had been princesses (*rāja-kumārīs*) from Janaka-purī, and some, daughters of the demigods (*deva-kanyā*).

Among the *gopīs*, some had the association of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, and they also had *pūrva-rāga*. These *gopīs* easily entered the *rāsa-līlā*, whether

they were married or not. [The unmarried *gopīs* were already betrothed, and therefore they also thought of Kṛṣṇa as their beloved in a paramour mood.] On the other hand, the married *gopīs* who had *pūrva-rāga* but did not have the association of *nitya-siddha gopīs* were stopped from entering. The *gopīs* described in the above mentioned verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.22.1) had association with the *nitya-siddha gopīs*. We know this because at the end of the month they invited Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citra, and all other such *gopīs* to join them in their worship. This means that they had the association of those *gopīs*, and consequently they could easily enter the *rāsa* dance.

This is confirmed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *nitya-siddha gopīs* and those who had their association entered the *rāsa-līlā* without difficulty, whereas the married *gopīs* with sons or daughters were checked by Yogamāyā. Even though they had *pūrva-rāga*, they could not go. It appeared that it was their husbands who had obstructed them, but actually it was Yogamāyā who did so. She had entered the minds of their husbands, fathers, mothers, and other relatives, influencing them to prevent the *gopīs* from going.

If Yogamāyā had wanted them to join the *rāsa-līlā*, she would have made duplicate forms of those *gopīs*. In this way the real *gopīs* would have been able to leave their homes unnoticed and enter *rāsa-līlā*. However, she could not help these *gopīs*, because they had some traces of a consciousness that was not favorable for fully developed paramour love in relationship to Kṛṣṇa (*parakiya-bhāva*). They still had the conception: “This is my husband, and these are my children.” Their affection was not solely for Kṛṣṇa but was shared with many others. ❧

Excerpted from *Gopī-gīta*, Introduction

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* The *śruti-cārī gopīs* and *upaniṣad-cārī gopīs* also performed austerities to attain perfection (*siddha*). Since they originally manifested from *śabda-brahma*, the transcendental sound vibration of Vedic scriptures, they are not *kāya-vyūha*, or direct expansions of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In other words, they did not originally manifest from Goloka.

The Nitya-siddha & Sādhana-siddha Gopīs

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Though there are many varieties of groups of *gopīs*, they can be said to be in two categories: *nitya-siddha* and *sādhana-siddha*:

- (1) *Nitya-siddha*: The *nitya-siddha* (eternally perfect) *gopīs* are also of two kinds:
 - (1.1) *kāya-vyūha*, the direct bodily expansions of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.
 - (1.2) *nitya-siddha-jīvas*, the eternally perfect living entities manifested from Baladeva Prabhu and having *gopī* forms. They never at any time come in contact with the material energy.
- (2) *Sādhana-siddha*: These *gopīs* are also of two categories:
 - (1.1) *ayauthikī*, those who are not in groups, but who came to *prakṛta* Vṛndāvana (where Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are manifest in this world) either individually or in a pair.
 - (1.2) *yauthikī*, those who came in groups. *Yauthikī gopīs* can be further divided into three categories:
 - (1.2.1) *ṛṣi-cārī* or *muni-cārī*, the sages of Daṇḍakāranya forest.
 - (1.2.2) *śruti-cārī*, coming from the group of the personified Vedas and *śruti-mantras*.
 - (1.2.3) those coming from Janakapura. When Rāma went to Janakapura to



marry Sītā, the unmarried princesses there had a desire to marry Him.

Having performed *sādhana* for many lifetimes, the *sādhana-siddha gopīs* had completely given up their anger, lust, greed, and worldly desires. Gradually they had received *niṣṭhā* (steadiness), then *ruci* (taste in chanting and other devotional practices), and then *āsakti* (natural attachment). Eventually, from the heart of the *rāgātmikā-gopīs*, *śuddha-sattva* had entered their hearts and they attained *bhāva* and then *prema*. This position is very, very rare.

The devotees in *prakāṣa* Vraja, the place in which Kṛṣṇa performs His manifest pastimes in the material world, are so rare. They have no worldly desires, pains, sufferings, or sorrows; they are not even aware of such desires or sufferings, having become freed from them in their stage of *sādhana**. They had attained this freedom from material contamination while still in the stage of *sādhana*, many lifetimes previous to their having become perfect.

When they had reached the most advanced stage of *bhāva*, they took birth in Vraja and began to associate with the eternal associates of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Those who were already married had no connection with their husbands, because Yogamāyā was protecting them.

The *kāya-vyūha* (bodily expansions) of Śrīmatī Rādhikā directly and freely entered *rāsa-līlā* in the groves of Vṛndāvana. No obstacles prevented them, and Yogamāyā made all arrangements for them as well as for the *nitya-siddha gopīs*. The *sādhana-siddha gopīs*, however, who had for the first time taken birth in earthly Vraja during Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes, were stopped.

Who are the *sādhana-siddha gopīs*? Some had worshiped Kātyāyanī with the hope of receiving a benediction that Śrī Kṛṣṇa would become their beloved. They had prayed, “*kātyāyanī mahāmāye, mahā-yoginy adhiśvari, nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī*

* “*Sādhana-bhakti* is of two kinds: *vaidhī* and *rāgānuga*. When *uttama-bhakti* is accomplished through the medium of the senses of the conditioned soul, it is called *sādhana-bhakti*. That *bhakti* which is accomplished through the function of the senses, and by which *bhāva-bhakti* is obtained, is called *sādhana-bhakti*” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu*, Verse 2, Śrī Bindu-vikāśinī-vṛtti).

patim me kuru te namaḥ – Please give me the benediction that Kṛṣṇa will become my husband.” Actually, the *gopīs* were young and had no real idea of having Kṛṣṇa as a husband; they had no real idea of ‘husband.’ They had seen that their parents were married. They had seen that their relatives were living with their own husbands. Thus, being attracted to Kṛṣṇa's enchanting beauty, they were simply thinking of Him as their ‘play husband.’ They wanted Him only as their beloved.

Some of the *sādhana-siddha gopīs* had taken birth in Vraja from the womb of *gopīs*. They were each married to one of the *gopas*, and due to hearing the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they developed great affection for Him and a desire to meet with Him. On the night of the *rāsa-līlā*, when they heard the sound of His flute, they made an attempt to meet Him but were stopped by their husbands.

Other *sādhana-siddha gopīs*, those who had sufficient association of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, went to meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa without restriction. Only those who had recently arrived there, and those who had taken birth for the first time in Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes on Earth, were checked.

Why were they checked? It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that a slight *kaṣāya* (obstacle) remained in their hearts, from which they had to become free. Thus, when their husbands checked them, their hearts burned in the fire of separation. The intensity of their feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa burnt any *aśubha* (inauspiciousness) still present in their hearts. In their meditation, they took Kṛṣṇa into their hearts and embraced Him there so tightly that in that meeting with Him their *subha* (auspiciousness) also disappeared. ❧

[Excerpted from *The Pinnacle of Devotion*,
Part 2, The Gopīs' Selfless Love]

The Glories of Yogamāyā

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Yogamāyā has so many forms, and we should never commit any offence to any of them. We should give them appropriate respect because they are the *śakti* of Bhagavān, but we should not perform any give-and-take transactions with them. This should be the only taking: “Please give your mercy to us so our enjoying spirit will go away.” Otherwise, this bartering mentality will lead us into material enjoyment. That should be our only prayer to them, and towards our most worshipful goddesses, the *gopīs*, we should have a mood of following and serving them.

In some places this potency of Bhagavān is known as *mahā-vibhūti*, in some places as Yogamāyā, and in some places as *ātma-māyā*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.6) we find the words *sambhavāmy ātma-māyayā*: “I incarnate by My internal energy.” What is the meaning of *ātma-māyā*? That potency of Bhagavān in His natural form. Where does this *ātma-māyā* come from? Who is its root? Śrīmatī Rādhikā. By the medium of this potency, *sac-cid-ānanda*, Bhagavān’s enjoyment takes place. This Yogamāyā potency is eternal (*nitya*), factual (*satya*), beginningless (*anādi*), and unlimited (*ananta*). She took birth along with Kṛṣṇa, so how can she be *anādi*, beginningless? Prior to her own birth, she arranged for Baladeva Prabhu to appear as the seventh child in the womb of Devakī and then she herself took birth from the womb of Yaśodā later. So because she performed some activity before taking birth, she is eternal, and is therefore known as Sanātani.

This Yogamāyā is the one who increases *bhajanānanda*, the happiness experienced by Kṛṣṇa's servants. This Yogamāyā, taking the essence of the *hlādinī* and *sāṁvit* potencies together, takes a devotee progressively through the stages of *śraddhā*, *bhāva*, *prema*, and all the way up to *mahābhāva*. As if feeding the devotees milk, she nurtures them in so many ways, and she arranges for a soul who has attained perfection in *sādhana* to appear in the womb of a *gopī*. The personification of that Yogamāyā, Paurṇamāsī, is the mother of Sāndīpani Muni and resides in Nandagrāma. In many ways she increases *rasa*, either by providing a stimulus, or by personally doing so as Paurṇamāsī. She increases Yaśodā's *vātsalya-rasa*, she increases the cowherd boys' *sakhya-rasa*, and she increases the *dāsyā-bhāva* of those in that *rasa*. She enhances all of the *rasas* and nurtures all living entities. She is the mother of variegated *bhajanānanda*, and if one doesn't take shelter of her, his *bhakti* cannot increase.

This Yogamāyā is the foundation of the Lord's many kinds of incarnations. She makes all the arrangements in regard to Bhagavān's dress, appearance, ornaments, and pastimes. On one of the many occasions when Kṛṣṇa played the flute, the *gopīs* went into a state of bewilderment. Some were wearing ornaments in the wrong places, and others placed make-up in places where it should not have been applied. They were in varying awkward conditions. Who arranged all of this? Yogamāyā. Their state of disarray increased their beauty one million times. Yogamāyā was the cause of this. Suppose one *gopī* puts an ankle bracelet around her neck, and a necklace around her ankle. When she goes before Kṛṣṇa, He will see it and say, "Oh, you have arranged your ornaments so beautifully!" So tell me then: how much more valuable has it become? The cause is Yogamāyā.

This potency of the Lord is *durvitarkyā*: inconceivable. Through Yogamāyā, Kṛṣṇa performs pastimes with His devotees, there is His *mugdhatā* (being spellbound in emotion), the *mugdhatā* of Yaśodā and all varieties of pastimes. From the very beginning it is done by her for the pleasure of Bhagavān and His devotees. In another form called Mahāmāyā, the activities of the demons are facilitated and the *jīvas* are bound within material existence.

Vasudeva took Kṛṣṇa to Gokula and brought the girl Yogamāyā back from the bed of Yaśodā. As long as she was with Vasudeva, she remained as Yogamāyā; but when she arrived in the jail of Kāṁsa, and Kāṁsa lifted her up to kill her, then the activities of Mahāmāyā began, and Yogamāyā, in an invisible form, began her own activities. Exactly when she changed to her shadow form, no one knew. Seeing this, it must appear to most persons that they are one and the same potency, but they are not one. When she was placed in the jail and Kāṁsa grabbed her, she became eight-armed Durgā. He became astonished and frightened, and said, "Oh, you are directly my worshipful goddess!" But ultimately, at what point she left her form as Yogamāyā, and how she did this and that – it is all *durvitarkyā*, inconceivable.

The potency of Bhagavān is eternal, factual, beginningless, unlimited and indescribable. It cannot be fully described in words and an ordinary man cannot portray its form. Only an elevated, liberated, great soul can describe a little of it. Otherwise it cannot be described at all.

We know that we are not the body. Hundreds of thousands of times we have spoken this fact to others, but then we perform some sensual activity and again we forget this. If for one second we forget that we are not this body, then all of our determination for spiritual advancement may

vanish. It happened to such a great liberated personality as Nārada. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is said that he was the cause of the appearance of Rāmacandra.* Selfishness for one penny can drown us in mundane consciousness. We must remain strong in *bhajana*, and with great humility we should perform *sādhana-bhajana*. Only by the influence of this Yogamāyā – when this potency is transmitted into the heart of a living entity – will the sentiment of *bhakti* arise, and we will be able to properly engage in the limbs of devotion headed by hearing and chanting. How is it done? By the essence of the *hlādinī* and *saṁvit* potencies together this sentiment arises in the heart of a *jīva*. This is called *viśuddha-sattva*, and this is the activity of Yogamāyā. She performs unlimited types of service in *Vaikuṇṭha*, *Dvārakā*, *Mathurā* and finally in *Vṛndāvana*.

There are differences in *bhakti*, and also differences in *rasa*. What are the differences in *bhakti*? *Sādhana-bhakti*, *bhāva-bhakti*, *vaidhī-bhakti*, *rāgānuga-bhakti*, and within them also are *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti*, *bhāva*, and next, in *nitya-siddha* devotees or in *sādhana-siddha* devotees are *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva* and *mahābhāva*. This variegatedness is all arranged

* Once Nārada desired to marry a princess, and in order to be successful at her *svayamvara*, he prayed to Viṣṇu for a face as beautiful as His. But to protect the *bhakti* of His devotee, Viṣṇu instead gave Nārada the face of a monkey. Not understanding why everyone was ridiculing him at the *svayamvara*, Nārada was then told to go and look at his reflection in a pond. Realising that Viṣṇu had deceived him, he cursed Viṣṇu that in His next life He would lose His wife, and that He would have to take the help of monkeys to get her back. Therefore Nārada is said to be the cause of the descent of Śrī Rāmacandra.

by Yogamāyā. *Bhakti* is one; *bhakti* is not two. It is one sentiment, even though externally we see that there are sixty-four kinds, or nine kinds, or five kinds, or three kinds. *Rasa* is also one. *Rasa* is not many, but according to the different fields of activity of *sādhakas*, it appears to be in different forms. *Śṛṅgāra* is one complete *rasa*, *mādhurya-rasa*. Manifest from that in sequence are *vātsalya*, *sakhya* and *dāsyā*, and it appears in those forms. Bhagavān is one, not two, but according to the gradation of one's devotion and the gradation of one's knowledge, He appears as Brahman, Paramātmā, Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa and so many other forms. The same moon, according to our angle of vision, appears as the lunar days of *dvitīyā*, *trayodaśī*, *pañcamī* and so on – the moon doesn't change. It is the same moon; only our vision of it changes. Therefore sometimes it is *amāvasyā*, the new moon night, sometimes it is *pūrṇimā*, the full moon, and in precisely the same way, the same Bhagavān appears differently according to the gradation in a devotee's *sādhana*. Similarly, Bhagavān's potency is also seen according to the gradation in a devotee's *sādhana*. All of this variegatedness is the arrangement of Yogamāyā, and therefore for Yogamāyā there are so many *mantras*:

śrī-paurṇamāsyas caraṇāravindam
vande sadā bhakti-vitāna-hetum
śrī-kṛṣṇa-līlābdhi-taraṅga-magnam
yasya manaḥ sarva-niṣevitāyāḥ

I offer obeisances to the lotus feet of Śrī Paurṇamāsī-devī, who is Bhagavān's Yogamāyā potency. She expands pure *prema-bhakti* for the feet of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and her mind is always immersed in the ocean of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

kātyāyani mahā-māye
mahā-yogīny adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī
patim me kuru te namaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.4

[The *gopīs* worshiped Yogamāyā with this *mantra*:] O Kātyāyani-devī, O great power of the Lord, O possessor of great mystic potency and mighty controller of everything, please make the son of Nanda Mahārāja my *pati*. I offer my obeisances unto you.

All of the variegatedness in Bhagavān's pastimes is arranged by Yogamāyā. Although the influence of this potency is indescribable, it is known to pure devotees, and they can describe it. Just as the glories of Bhagavān are indescribable, the glories of this potency are also indescribable, but knowing something of it, Bhagavān's pure devotees have described it. Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Vyāsa, Parāśara, Nārada, Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, Jīva Gosvāmī – many *ācāryas* have described it.

sā parāparayoḥ śaktyoḥ
parā śaktir nigadyate
prabhoḥ svābhāvikī sā hi
khyātā prakṛtir ity api
Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (2.4.178)

Bhagavān's potencies are classified either as superior or inferior. Yogamāyā is His

superior, internal potency, and because she is Bhagavān's natural potency, in some places she is known by the name Prakṛti.

This Yogamāyā and Mahāmāyā are called the *parā*, superior, and *aparā*, inferior, potencies, respectively. They are perceived as two forms. Actually they are one, but the original is *parā*, and its shadow is *aparā*. What is the meaning of "shadow"? That which is non-different from

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the original but does not perform the same functions, is called a shadow. But not like the shadow of a tree which performs no activity. Our shadow also performs no activity, but the shadow of Bhagavān's potency is not inactive. In Goloka, Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa's taking birth, devotees serving Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's form, the *gopīs'* forms, the trees and plants there – everything is manifest by the influence of Yogamāyā and is true and eternal. And what are the activities of the *apara-śakti*? In different places in nature, by the action of this

potency, some things are unreal, and some things are temporary. Some things are *satya*, real, and some things are *asatya*, false. All the relationships that we create in this world are false, whereas all of the objects of this world are true, but temporary.

Shells from the ocean are real, and silver is also real, but the illusion of thinking the shells to be silver is *asatya*, unreal. These shells glitter just like silver, and both of these things are real. The seer is also real. Three things are real, but

considering these shells to be silver is unreal. Or when there is a rope, a snake and a seer, these three things are also real, but the illusion of considering the rope to be a snake is unreal. At night, when we are walking along in the dark, we may step on a rope. Because it is a little stiff, it wraps around our foot and we cry out, “Snake! Snake!” Then with a lamp we take a look, and our fear disappears. We may have thought that a snake had bitten us and that we were going to die, but after some light comes, that illusion is dispelled.

All of us are undoubtedly real, but to take it that “I am this body” is illusion. And to think that “all of these objects belong to me” is also illusion. What is “mine”? “I belong to Kṛṣṇa, and I am His servant.” Up to this point our conception is real. We should consider all objects as instruments to be employed in the service of Bhagavān, but instead we think, “I am their master.” On account of this, so much quarrelling and fighting is going on. *Sādhus* generally consider that nothing belongs to them, but when necessity for a certain object arises, even they claim ownership over it and fight amongst themselves.

Therefore, this *māyā-śakti* is very peculiar. This potency is one, but the external potency binds the *jīva* in an illusory conception of himself and his surroundings, whereas the internal potency, *Yogamāyā*, illuminates within the *jīva* the knowledge of things related to Bhagavān and *bhakti*. We may pray to Mahāmāyā, “Please be merciful to us. Now we are a little entrapped in your illusion, but we pray to you for *bhakti* to the feet of Kṛṣṇa.” ❀

Excerpt from *Going Beyond Vaikuṇṭha*, Chapter 8
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[Śrīla Gurudeva, Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, leading a group of faithful devotees and pilgrims throughout the land of Vraja-maṇḍala arrives at the bank of the Yamunā, Cīra Ghāṭa, where the Vraja-gopīs performed Kātyāyanī-vrata, worship of Yogamāyā Devī for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He explains many secret truths about this *vrata* and then in great happiness engages himself and all the devotees in worship of Kātyāyanī-devī. Below is an English translation from the Hindi that Śrīla Gurudeva spoke at this place. You can listen to the original hindi sound file by clicking on this [link](#).]

Śrīla Gurudeva Speaks on Kātyāyanī-vrata

Vraja-maṇḍala Parikramā, Cīra ghāṭa, 9 November 1993



Śrīla Gurudeva: This Vraja-dhāma is not a new place. It has been existing since time immemorial. By hearing and witnessing these pastimes, a greed to attain Kṛṣṇa awakens in the heart of the *sādhakas*. The Śrūtiś also developed this greed, as did the sixty thousand *ṛṣi*ś of the Daṇḍākāraṇya forest. They all thought, “We want to serve Kṛṣṇa in the same way as the *gopī*ś who stayed with Him and worshiped Him. They performed *rāsa* and satisfied Kṛṣṇa by that. We also want to be able to do this.” Even at present times, upon hearing the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, a *sādhaka* may develop a greed within his heart to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa like the *gopī*ś.

Not only one or two *gopī*ś were there, but many different groups. For those who were qualified, who had been worshiping and practicing *bhakti* for a long time (like one, two, or even ten *kalpas*), Yogamāyā had arranged to take birth in Vraja, from the womb of a *gopī*. The princesses (*rāja-kumarī*ś) of Janaka Purī and the *ṛṣi*ś of the Daṇḍākāraṇya forest came to Vraja as groups (*yūtha*ś), whereas other *gopī*ś came alone (*ayūtha*). Those who had been worshiping in the mood of *mādhurya* for tens of millions of years by chanting the *kāma-gāyatrī* and *gopāla-mantra*, they all took birth here as *gopī*ś.

When they were very young, as it is the custom in Vraja... [audio cut]. We find this custom not only in Vraja, but all over India. These young girls don't know what marriage means. They have no understanding of *vivāha* (marriage). From childhood, they approach Saṅkara, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Umā, in search of a good husband. From a young age, Rukmiṇī worshiped Umā, and Sīta-devī also started this worship from childhood. As such, this Kātyāyanī *pūjā* was a custom from ancient times. So from birth, all these *gopīs* who now had taken birth from the womb of the *gopīs* of Vraja, had impressions from their *sādhana* in their previous life (*samskāras*) from birth. And in this birth, seeing the *nitya-siddha*, or eternally perfected *gopīs*, they worshiped Kātyāyanījī from childhood.

Kātyāyanījī resides at this place. All the small *kumārī* girls, from this village (Sehara) and from the neighboring villages as well, would come here. Some would be of the age of two, three, four, five, six—as long as they were not married, up to the age of twelve, they would come here to do this *pūjā*. After twelve, they would get married, and that marriage would be strong. Nowadays, however, even marriages that take place at the age of thirty are weak. Marriages are no longer arranged by the family. Rather, girls now make their own arrangements. Sometimes they only marry in court, they arrange in whatever way they want, but then they leave their husband and go for a second, third, or fourth marriage. Both boys and girls are doing these things now. But before, when girls were given in marriage at the age of twelve, the verbal agreement made by the parents would last not just for one life, but for ten lives. That's how strong these agreements were. That's how their *samskāras* were made.



So these small girls would come here from their villages, and for one month they would bathe in the Yamunā. There is a tree at that place, and the Yamunā was flowing just nearby. The flow of the Yamunā is sometimes here and sometimes there. Now she is somewhat closer. One time when we came, she was flooding this whole area, yet at other times, we have seen her way over there. Still, she anyhow remains here. She especially refuses to leave Tapovana and always stays close to that place.

Here, the *gopīs* performed *arādhana* (worship) for one month by bathing every day, changing their clothes, and then offering *dhūpa* (incense), *dīpa* (ghee-lamps), conch shell water, and so on. They would perform worship with sixteen ingredients, such as *bhoga-rāga*, *naivedya* etc. Now, a stone deity is present here, but before they would make a deity out of sand. They would place that sand deity under the tree and worship it as Kātyāyanī. What would they say?

kātyāyani mahā-māye
mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutam devi
patim me kuru te namaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.4

They did not understand the meaning of ‘*pati*’ (husband) or know the meaning of marriage. But they used to do this since childhood. If they had known or had the association of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, they would not have used the word ‘*pati*.’ They would have used a different word instead, like ‘*priyatam*’ (beloved), or any other word.

When twenty-nine days had passed, on the thirtieth day, these young girls invited all the married girls whom had not given birth to children yet and were therefore still accepted as *kumarīs*—Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Campakalatā, Indulekhā, and so on. They also invited the *vipakṣa-gopīs*, like Padmā, Candrāvalī, Śaibyā, and Bhadrā, as well as *gopīs* like Kuṇḍalatā. They invited all of them, thinking, “If they come, our *pūjā* will become successful.” So on that last full moon day, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Rādhikā, and all the *gopīs* mentioned earlier came here, to this place. They were here, at this *ghāṭa*, on the bank of Yamunā.

In the mood of children, all the young *gopīs* who had been observing the *vrata* took off their clothes and went to take bath in the Yamunā. It was 4 a.m. when they started to take bath, the time of *brahma-muhūrta*, and it was quite cold. Even though they were shivering, having a strong desire to successfully finish their *vrata*, they still took their bath. At that time, playing, Kṛṣṇa arrived on the scene, along with Subala, Śrīdāma, and other young boys of two-and-a-half to three years old. With the boys, He collected all the young *gopīs*’ clothes and climbed up into the tree. He there hung all the clothes onto the different branches.

Seeing that He had not yet been able to get the attention of the young *gopīs* who were absorbed in their bathing, Kṛṣṇa started laughing and clapping, making a lot of noise and commotion. The *gopīs* then looked up and exclaimed, “Oh! Where have our clothes gone? And who is that in the tree?” They looked and saw it was Kanhaiyā, with some other boys. They then noticed all their clothes—red, blue, yellow, green, and so on—hanging from above. “It seems like Kṛṣṇa may not leave us so easily today,” they thought. The *gopīs* folded their hands and began to pray, but Kṛṣṇa refused to give them back their clothes, and instead began to joke with them.

Kṛṣṇa said, “You have committed an offense to the Jala-devatā, the presiding deity of the water here. One should never bathe naked, especially not in the dark. You have committed an offense, so you should fold your hands and beg for forgiveness from the presiding deity of the water.” At last, the *gopīs* realized that He for whom they had been doing this *vrata* had now come, and that whatever He was saying was only like a child’s play. They therefore relented and said, “Okay, okay, we will do whatever You ask from us.”

In the end, Kṛṣṇa told the *gopīs* to come out of the water. He sent Śrīdāma and Subala to go and bring the *gopīs* to Him, but when the boys came down from the tree, all the *gopīs* together threatened them, shouting, “Grab those naughty boys.” In fear, the *sākhās* quickly ran away.

Some time later, the *gopīs* finally came out of the water, as Kṛṣṇa had requested, and with folded hands, they offered *praṇāma* to Him. After receiving their clothes back from Him, they returned back to their home.

On that last day, Kṛṣṇa appeared to them as the *devatā* (He who had been the object of their

worship during their *vrata*) and said, I will fulfill all your hearts' desires in the upcoming autumn full moon, *śarada-pūrṇimā*.

Why did the young *gopīs* call all the *sakhīs* on the last day? Not because the *vrata* had ended, but in order to get the association of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*. Without their association, it is impossible to become eternally perfected, or *nitya-siddha*. They could attain this on their own.

When Kṛṣṇa played His flute at the time of *rāsa*, those *gopīs* who already had children and those who had *pūrva-anurāga* were unable to come. They were stopped by their husbands. At that time, in intense pain of separation, they took Kṛṣṇa into their hearts and embraced Him there. As such, becoming completely purified, leaving all other moods aside, they then arrived first at Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa*.

Therefore, this place is the place of perfection for the *gopīs*. Now we will go over there, to the bank of the Yamunā, and whoever is able to take bath, they can do so. Then, returning from there, we will go to the temple of Kātyāyanī, where we will do her *ārati* with incense (*dhūpa*) and ghee lamps (*dīpa*). We will chant this *mantra* (*kātyāyani mahā-māye...*) and please her and Kṛṣṇa by offering flowers to them. We will pray, "Just like you fulfilled the inner-desires of the *gopīs*, in the same way, please fulfill our heart's desires as well."

Gaura Premānande Hari Hari Bol!

[Śrīla Gurudeva and devotees in unison loudly chant again and again:]

*kātyāyani mahā-māye / mahā-yoginy adhiśvari
nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī / patim me kuru te namaḥ*

Gurudeva: *priyatama me kuru te namaḥ*

All devotees: *priyatama me kuru te namaḥ* ❁



Questions

Q: Is Kātyāyanī-*vrata* recommended for those who aspire for the *parakīyā* mood? Wasn't it performed by the *gopīs* in the *svakīyā* mood and they chanted the Kātyāyanī-*mantra* to get Kṛṣṇa as their husband?

A: It is an incorrect conclusion to say that this *vrata* was performed by the *gopīs* in the *svakīyā* mood. It was the *gopīs' purva-rāga* that led them to perform this *vrata* under the direction of Yogamāyā herself, Śrī Purnamāsī devī.

Purva-rāga is like the "falling in love" stage. In *purva-rāga*, they are maddened in separation for Kṛṣṇa even before the start of their actual



& Answers on Kātyāyanī-vrata

meeting. This was because they had heard so many good things about Kṛṣṇa, had seen His beautiful form, and especially had heard His flute playing. So their only desire was to meet Kṛṣṇa and have loving pastimes with Him.

In Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's *Sārārtha Darśini* commentary to the verse of the Kātyāyanī-mantra (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.22.4): *kātyāyanī mahāmāye mahā-yoginy adhiśvari, nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī, patiṁ me kuru te namah*—he revealed the real mood of these *gopīs*. He said that with this *mantra*, they are petitioning Yogamāyā to arrange that Kṛṣṇa becomes their *pati*. We already know that the term *pati* does not

just mean husband. Śrīla Gurudeva once said that these very young *gopīs*, who are not more than six years old, don't even really know the meaning of *pati*, or husband. But even if *pati* is to be taken literally as husband, then such a petition is asked with the knowledge that Kṛṣṇa cannot be possibly married to them, because by social standard, only those with brahminical thread can get married, and Kṛṣṇa has not yet received this thread. Another rule is that marriage can be done only with the consent of the parents. These *gopīs* are aware that their parents would possibly not allow this.

Thus, in the *parakīyā* mood, by chanting *nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī patiṁ me kuru te namah*, they

strongly petitioned Yogamāyā to arrange that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, be their *devi-pati*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that they take the word *devi* to mean *divyati* (play), referring to Kṛṣṇa as *devyati*, or one who plays and causes one to play. So disregarding all the rules of marriage and possible social objections, they petitioned Yogamāyā to arrange for Kṛṣṇa to be their “play husband,” like in a Gandharva wedding. In such a wedding, marriage is simply performed by an exchange of garlands or in any other non-traditional way, as an expression of their mutual love and acceptance of each other. Indeed, this desire was fulfilled in a very unique way, when on the last day of their *vrata*, Kṛṣṇa stole all their clothes and forced the *gopīs* to come to Him naked to reclaim them. After hiding their real desire, the *gopīs* finally surrendered and happily offered their whole body to Kṛṣṇa, as they came to get their clothes, one by one.

The *nitya-siddha gopīs*, who are a little older and are already married, are in the category of *parakīyā* consorts of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, for their relationship with Kṛṣṇa broke their marriage vows in society. But the *gopīs* who performed the Kātyāyanī-*vrata* were unmarried. Therefore, there was no social duty to the husband to break. It is only on this basis that they are considered *svakīyā* consorts of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, but Śrīla Gurudeva confirms in his *Ujjvala Nīlamanī* commentary: “They are essentially known as *svakīyā*, yet there is no clear indication or revelation that they have actually married Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, they have concealed desire, inhibition, and a limitation in regard to seeing and speaking with Kṛṣṇa, which are the qualities of *parakīyā*.”

I think that by following Kātyāyanī-*vrata*, gradually we can understand the real *gaura-vāñī*, or the teachings of Mahāprabhu, as embodied in the *śloka* of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:

*ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas
tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kācid upāsanaṁ vraja-vadhū-
vargenā yā kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam-amalam
premā pumartho mahān
śrī-caitanya mahāprabhor-matam-idam
tatrādaro naḥ paraḥ*

Our worshipful Lord is Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His transcendental abode is Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. How the young brides of Vraja (*gopīs*) worship Him is the most excellent method of worship. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is our pure and flawless evidence of this. *Kṛṣṇa-prema* is the ultimate goal of human life. This is the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We have supreme regard for this conclusion and have no inclination to follow any other.

In this verse, it is made clear that the best method of worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is that performed by the *gopīs* of Vraja, and prominent among the various kinds of worship observed by the *gopīs* is Kātyāyanī-*vrata*.

There is another important point about the use of the word *pati* in the Kātyāyanī-*vrata*. The word *pati* means *pālana-kartā*, one’s maintainer and guardian, and this is the mood that is most essential in the six stages of surrender, known as *goptṛtve-varaṇam-tathā*. Without having this mood of Kṛṣṇa being one’s *pati*, or *pālana-kartā*, one cannot surrender and thus cannot enter the doorway of *bhakti*.

Q: How can someone who is aspiring to be a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā perform Kātyāyanī-pūja, which is to attain meeting with Kṛṣṇa?

A: It is another misconception to think that the *mañjarīs* have no desire for *sambhoga* or meeting with Kṛṣṇa. We have been inspired by our Guru-varga to attain the *bhakti* of the Vrajavāsīs. The Vrajavāsīs are called *rāgaṭmika* because the main constitution of their *ātmā* (self) is *rāga* (attachment), and their *bhakti* is therefore referred to as *rāgamayī-bhakti* (full of *rāga*). In Chapter 21 of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Jaiva-dharma*, you can read about *rāgamayī-bhakti*. The devotional activities to attain and follow this *bhakti* is called *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*. There are two types of *rāgamayī-bhakti*: *kāma-rūpā* and *sambandha-rūpā*.

The unprecedented and exclusive *mādhurya-prema* of the *gopīs* is an example of *kāma-rūpā bhakti*. Its intrinsic characteristic is *sambhoga-tṛṣṇā*, or the thirst, the desire, for loving meeting with Kṛṣṇa.

Although this *prema* is completely pure and free from *kāma* (lust), it is given the label *kāma-rūpā* (transcendental lust), just to distinguish it from *dāśya-prema*, *sakhya-prema*, and *vātsalya-prema*. These three all belong in the *sambandha-rūpā* category, where devotion is based on one's conception and identity of being related to Kṛṣṇa as a servant, friend, or parent. *Kāma-rūpā* is exclusive to the *gopīs*. It is not even present in the queens of Dvārakā or in Kujā of Mathurā. *Kāma-rūpā* is therefore only found in Vraja and nowhere else.

“*Anuga*” means ‘to follow’ or ‘be under guidance,’ so the term *rāgānuga-bhakti* refers to

the *bhakti* of those aspiring to follow the *rāgamayī-bhakti* of the *rāgaṭmika-vrajavāsīs*. According to the type of *rāgamayī-bhakti* that one is following, there are two types of *rāgānuga-sādhana bhakti* – *kāmānuga* and *sambandhānuga*.

The word *pati* means *pālan-kartā*, one's maintainer and guardian, which is the mood most essential in the six stages of surrender, known as *gopīṛve-varaṇam-tathā*. Without having this mood of Kṛṣṇa being one's *pati*, or *pālan-kartā*, maintainer and guardian, one cannot surrender and thus enter the doorway of *bhakti*.

In regard to the desire to follow *kāmānuga*, there are also two types: (1) *sambhoga-icchāmayī*, which means having the desire to engage in playful sportive pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, and (2) *tat-tad-bhāva-icchāmayī*, or the desire to experience the sweet moods that the *gopīs* of Vraja have towards Kṛṣṇa. Take note that both are in the category of *kāmānuga*, and thus both—*sambhoga icchāmayī* as well as *tat-tat-bhava-icchāmayī*—follow the intrinsic characteristic of *kāmarūpā-bhakti*, which is *sambhoga-tṛṣṇā*, the desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa. There is only one difference really between the two: for those in the category

of *sambhoga-icchāmayī*, their desire for meeting is satisfied by independently meeting with Kṛṣṇa, whereas for those in *tat-tat-bhāva-icchāmayī*, like the *mañjarīs*, the desire for meeting is satisfied only by arranging the meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and then experiencing the happiness of their *svāminī* Rādhā meeting with Kṛṣṇa. Without this desire for *sambhoga*, which results in very sweet loving pastimes, this *gopī-prema* cannot be called *kāmarūpā* or *madhurya-prema*, as it would not differentiate from *dāśya*, *sakhya*, or *vātsalya-prema*. So this Kātyāyanī-vrata is exclusively for those who want to follow *kāmānuga-bhakti*.

Those aspiring to become *mañjarīs* can therefore perform this *vrata*, not by imagining themselves as *gopīs*, but by seeing themselves as conditioned souls who are aspiring to be qualified *sādhakas*. We can pray to Yogamāyā that she will give us shelter through the agency of Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas, and that she will release us from the dominion of her shadow, Mahāmāyā. We pray that we can develop easily from *śraddhā* to *sādhusaṅga*, *bhajana-kriya*, *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭha*, *ruçi*, *āśakti*, *bhāva*, and develop *prema* in the company of Śrī Guru and the devotees of Mahāprabhu. They will train us to begin to experience *purva-rāga* like the *sādhana-siddha gopīs*. We pray that in not too many lifetimes, we may enter Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes in this world, and get the association of the *nitya-siddha-gopīs*, who will train us to become qualified maidservants of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So those in this mood may chant *nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī, patiṁ me kuru te namaḥ* and take the word *devī* to refer to *devīmāyī* Rādhā. In this conception, we can pray to Yogamāyā that both *nanda suta* (Kṛṣṇa) and *devī* (Rādhā) be our *pati*.*

Q: Śrīla Gurudeva never performed this *vrata*, so why do you do this?

A: Just because you did not see Śrīla Gurudeva perform this *vrata* physically does not mean he never did it. This *vrata*, like the mood of the *gopīs*, is very confidential. It is not for everyone. Those who are following this *vrata* do not impose that everyone should follow it, just as those who do not want to follow it cannot impose that those who are inspired to do so, cannot do. From the time of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvātī Ṭhākura,

* *Pati* can be understood in two ways:

- 1) *prāṇa-pati*, or the beloved of my life;
- 2) *prema pālayati iti pati* - One who maintains one through love and devotion is called *pati*.

following the instruction of Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, the Gauḍīya Maṭha has been inspiring the devotees to follow this *vrata* by including it in the Vaiṣṇava calendar. Otherwise, why put this *vrata* in the calendar? But since this is not for everyone, even not for all *rāgānugas*, but exclusively for those aspiring for *kāmānuga-bhakti*, the Kātyāyanī-*vrata* remains more confidential and optional.

Since the first time I came and stayed in Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, several Vaiṣṇavas have always been following this *vrata* after Kārtika, and that is because they know that in the past Śrīla Gurudeva also secretly followed it. They personally witnessed on many occasions how he would worship Yogamāyā by chanting her *praṇāma-mantra* and this Kātyāyanī-*mantra*.

It is true that Śrīla Gurudeva would discourage devotees from joining the Kātyāyanī-pūjā done by people who perform it in the mood of demigod worship (like how many Durgā worshipers do in Bengal) or the pūjā performed by those who are in the association of *sahajiyās* or in the *anugātya* of unqualified persons. However, when during the last nine years of Śrīla Gurudeva's manifest presence in this world, some Vaiṣṇavas in Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha were following this *vrata* every year as scheduled in the calendar, Śrīla Gurudeva knew about this and he encouraged it.

Q: What exactly does the Kātyāyanī-*vrata* mean? We cannot imitate the austerities of the *gopīs*, so how to properly follow this *vrata*?

A: Following a *vrata* does not just mean to perform austerities. It is true we cannot and should not imitate the austerities of the *gopīs* who performed this *vrata*. We have to understand that the essence of this *vrata* is not performing austerities. We know that Laksmī-devī up to now is still doing austerities

in Baelvan to enter the *rāsa-līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but her austerities never gave her success. Why? Because she did not take the *anugatyā* of the *gopīs*.

This Kātyāyanī-vrata really means following a vow to receive the mercy of Yogamāyā. Under her guidance, in the form of Paurṇamāsī-devī and Vṛndā-devī, we pray to be released from the influence of Mahāmāyā and to be able to enter Vṛndāvana as qualified maidservants of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So following Kātyāyanī-vrata means dedicating this whole month after Kārtika in honor and worship of Yogamāyā and Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

According to one's ability, one can daily perform special prayers in glorification of Yogamāyā and sing *kīrtanas* about the moods of the love of the *gopīs* and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. One can also perform *pūjā* to Kātyāyanī-devī Yogamāyā by daily offering her *arcana*, *puṣpañjali*, and chanting her *mantras*.

The best thing is to do this *vrata* under the guidance of like-minded senior Vaiṣṇavas, in the company of other like-minded devotees, and to hear *hari-kāthā* about this special pastime from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the commentaries of our *ācāryas*, like Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Kavi Karnapūra, and others.

Q: What important teachings can we learn from this pastime of the *gopīs* performing Kātyāyanī-vrata?

A: Aside from what we already have mentioned, here are some important teachings we hope to realize:

- (1) What to speak of becoming qualified to enter Vṛndāvana, one cannot escape the material world without the mercy of Yogamāyā.
- (2) Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the complete *svarūpa-śakti*. Yogamāyā is Her special manifestation that governs all activities in the spiritual world. Mahāmāyā is the shadow of Yogamāyā, governing material existence.

- (3) The highest and complete principle of *sannyāsa* is embodied in the *mādhurya-prema* of the *gopīs*, whose intrinsic characteristic is *sambhoga-trṣṇā*, or the thirst for loving meeting with Kṛṣṇa. Their constant burning desire is to completely offer their whole body to be utilized in the service and complete pleasure of the Beloved's senses.
- (4) *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.22.26, states a very important lesson, taught by Kṛṣṇa to the *gopīs*:

Kṛṣṇa said, "If someone worships Me impurely or improperly, I can make that offering pure because I am full of good qualities. What then to say of your absolutely pure desire and pure love? The desire of one absorbed in Me does not lead to material desire for sense enjoyment. Because the object of love is the topmost spiritual entity, it results in the disappearance of material desire. Just as grains roasted in the fire can never grow new sprouts."

- (5) The principle of *sādhū-saṅga* and *anugatyā* is essential in both the *sādhaka* and *siddha* stage. By accepting *guru* and performing *sādhana* in *sādhū-saṅga* (high class association), we can progress towards perfection. When we become *sādhana-siddha*, still our *prema* will have to develop under the guidance of the *nitya-siddhas*. In the case of the *sādhana-siddha-gopīs*, by taking the *anugatyā* of Vṛndā-devī and Paurṇamāsī-devī, they performed this *vrata*. Upon completion, they received the opportunity to associate with the *nitya-siddha-gopīs* and meet with Kṛṣṇa, who promised them that in the autumn season of the following year, they would enter into His *rāsa-līlā*. ❀

Dhana Mora Nityānanda

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

**dhana mora nityānanda, pati mora gauracandra,
prāṇa mora yugala-kīśora
advaita ācārya bala, gadādhara mora kula,
narahari vilasai mora (1)**

My treasure is Nityānanda Prabhu, my master is Śrī Gauracandra, and my very life-force is the youthful Divine Couple of Vraja. My strength is Advaita Ācārya, my family is Gadādhara Paṇḍita, and Narahari Sarakāra is my pleasure.

**vaiṣṇavera pada-dhūli, tāhe mora snāna-keli,
tarpaṇ mora vaiṣṇavera nāma
vicāra koriyā mane, bhakti-rasa āśvādane,
madhyastha śrī-bhāgavat-purāṇa (2)**

I enjoy taking bath in the foot dust of the Vaiṣṇavas, and I become satiated by chanting the names of the Vaiṣṇavas. I have concluded that to relish the nectar of devotion, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the best medium.

**vaiṣṇavera ucchiṣṭa, tāhe mora mano-niṣṭha,
vaiṣṇavera nāmete ullāsa
vṛndāvane cavutārā, tāhe mora mano-gherā,
kohe dīna narottama-dāsa (3)**

My mind is fixed on obtaining the devotees' food remnants, and I blossom with joy at the remembrance of the Vaiṣṇavas' names. My mind dwells in the courtyard of Vṛndāvana. Thus speaks the lowly Narottama dāsa.